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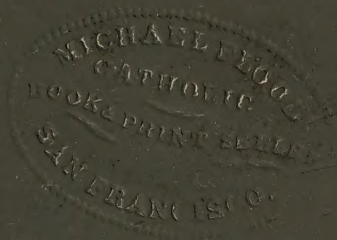
CATHOLIC

# THE PRIEST ON THE MISSION.

## A Course of Lectures

ON

## MISSIONARY AND PAROCHIAL DUTIES.

BY

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*Ne quær s quis hoc dixerit, sed quid dicatur attende.'*
De Imitatione Christi, lib. 1, c. 5.

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BY ONE OF THEIR BRETHREN

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ON

# MISSIONARY AND PAROCHIAL DUTIES.

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# PREFACE.

THIS little work is a very humble contribution to that branch of ecclesiastical teaching which has received the name of Pastoral Theology. The lectures, however, of which it consists, have but a slender claim, whether as regards their materials or their form, to so ambitious a title. They are no more than the communications of a single though somewhat ample experience on the subjects to which they relate, addressed to those who are on the point of entering on a career which their author has well nigh run, and they are couched in that familiar and even colloquial phrase which seemed best to befit the mutual relations of an occasional teacher and a youthful audience. A brief account of the circumstances which gave rise to them will form the most suitable explanation of their motive and object.

When I was called to the duties of the Mission, rather more than two and twenty years ago, I felt sensibly the want of some treatise embodying and applying the practical experience of priests who had spent many years in the holy service to which I was about to devote myself. Of works more or less to my purpose there was no scarcity. But they were either written by foreigners unacquainted with the peculiar circumstances of England, or they were too technical and abstract, or they dealt with one or two only of the subjects on which I needed assistance, such as preaching, or the confessional. There was no lack also, but, on the contrary, an abundant supply of valuable information on matters of detail, accorded by the priests around me. But to this kind of help I could not always have recourse; nor at last did it possess the especial value of recorded and carefully weighed testimony. Yet, if the need in question came powerfully home to one who was called to these duties in middle age, and after no inconsiderable experience of some at least of their number in another communion, with far greater force must it be apt to press on the more thoughtful of those who are suddenly transferred from college to missionary life,

and who find themselves at once in the very midst of its varied and complicated difficulties and responsibilities, with no other assistance than such as they can obtain, by snatches as it were, from this or that priest; and sometimes, when placed in a mission by themselves, without even so much as this precarious advantage. I do not for a moment forget the special grace given to those who worthily receive the Sacrament of Holy Order, towards the right performance of its duties. But, as the promise of this Divine aid does not dispense us from the obligation of studying our theology with a view to preaching and the confessional, so neither can it be pleaded, except by the enthusiast, as a reason for neglecting to avail ourselves of such further means as are the ordinary conditions of the supernatural succour vouchsafed to us.

Hence I formed a sort of resolution that, if God should give me health and strength to pass any considerable portion of my life in the discharge of missionary or parochial duties, I would place my experience on record for the benefit, if so be, of those who might come after me. I had for a long time no thought of giving publicity to this experience during my life,

and for the plain reason that I might thereby seem to set myself up as a teacher of my brethren, at the feet of many among whom I ought rather to sit as a learner. This difficulty, however, has been removed by circumstances not of my own seeking. About a year ago, my Diocesan, with that kindness which I have so largely experienced at his Grace's hands, invited me to give a Course of Lectures to the Students of his Theological Seminary, leaving the choice of a subject, within certain limits, to my own discretion. Looking to the need which I myself had experienced when somewhat in the position of those I was thus called upon to address, I could not hesitate for a moment as to the mode of employing the discretion thus accorded to me. The question of publishing the Lectures was a further one, involving considerations of its own. But here again I was encouraged by the same voice of authority to determine this question in the affimative. When the Archbishop appointed me to deliver the Lectures, he was pleased to express a hope that I would give them a chance of circulation beyond the limits of the Seminary for which they were immediately intended. This encouragement his Grace has now followed up, by an approval of the

work as it stands; an approval, however, which need not of course imply an agreement with every one of the opinions I have so freely expressed, or with the mode in which the bent of my disposition may have led me here and there to express them.

Here I will say a word or two in anticipation of an objection which may conceiveably be brought against a work of this kind. It may be said that instruction given to ecclesiastical students on the practical duties of the office for which they are preparing should be confined within the walls of a college, instead of being exposed to the view of a critical, not to say hostile, public. I have carefully considered this objection, and have come to the deliberate conclusion that it ought not to prevail with me. I am convinced that the more generally our methods of dealing with those committed to our charge are known, the more will their value be appreciated by the wise and good of every class in this country. There is nothing which the English people dislike more than mystery and reticence, and I believe that one main reason why our doctrines, discipline, and institutions are suspected, is that we have hitherto been apt to shroud them in

a sort of dignified reserve. Those who mistrust them are entitled to every allowance, and I, for one, ought to be among the last to speak severely of delusions which at one time I so largely shared. With regard especially to Catholic colleges, I used to believe that their processes was as dark and mysterious as those of a Masonic Lodge, and ignorance, as I need hardly say, is the feeder of imagination. I think it is high time that the veil should be withdrawn, and that we should be seen as we are. We have nothing to be ashamed of, except the inadequacy of our teaching to our doctrine, and of our performance to our standard of duty. I will but add, that the following Lectures were written with no eye to any one but those to whom they were addressed, and that the alterations or additions which they have received since they were delivered have been made with the sole object of rendering them more useful to the same class of readers.

I cannot close these remarks without expressing my heartfelt acknowledgments to the Prelates, Superiors of Religious Orders, Rectors of Colleges, and Clergy, both Secular and Regular, who from every

part of Great Britain and Ireland have generously supported me in my undertaking; not merely by giving orders for the work, but by private letters in which they have expressed their cordial approbation of its object. I well know how much of this support I must attribute to personal kindness, and I cannot but apprehend that the claims of the work itself may not be found to correspond with the expectations which that kindness has suggested. Yet I can truly say that whatever faults it may possess are due to the want, not of thoughtfulness and care in the preparation of it, but of the ability to convey a more perfect representation of the ideal before my mind.

F. O.

St. John's, Islington:
*Feast of Saint John the Evangelist*, 1870.

## *PRELIMINARY ADDRESS TO ECCLESIASTICAL STUDENTS ON THE OFFICE FOR THE ORDINATION OF A PRIEST.*

Reverend and Dear Brethern :

In offering the following Lectures to your kind and attentive consideration, I think that it will not be out of place to introduce them with a few words of practical comment on that sublime Office of Holy Church by which she crowns your vocation, and qualifies you for the discharge of those several duties, to the explanation of which the following pages are directed. There are two reasons which incline me to make this addition to the Lectures as they were delivered. The first is, that in the course of them I have more than once referred to portions of the Office in question as bearing on the duties which form my more immediate subject. The second, that both prospectively and retrospectively the Ordination Office ought to be continually before your minds : prospectively, because you will learn from it how

great is that ministry of salvation to which you are about to be called; and retrospectively, because, when actually called to it, you will derive the greatest advantage from bringing to mind the very words in which the Church has invested you with your high commission.

The first Ordination which I witnessed after I was a Catholic was in the old chapel of St. Edmund's College, in the year 1846. Those who remember that chapel will bear me out in saying that neither its construction nor its appendages were such as to enchance the dignity of the sacred offices celebrated within its walls; and now that it has been replaced by one far more spacious, and far better calculated to give effect to the worship of the Church, I may make this remark without the least risk of offence. Indeed, I make it only with the view of bringing out in all the greater prominence the intrinsic majesty and beauty of the Office to which I refer, and of paying a just tribute to the reverence and devotion with which all holy solemnities were there carried out. In the case to which I allude, the celebrant was the late Right Reverend Dr. Griffiths, whose truly paternal manner of administering the Ordination rite, was more than an ample compensation for the want of eternal accessories to its celebration.

I followed it word for word with the Pontifical in my hand, and had thus the means of noting all those characteristics of thrilling beauty, affectionate tenderness, and profound application of Holy Scripture with which it is replete; and I now purpose to direct your attention to some of them, in the hope of giving you a share in the feelings of delight and wonder which they excited in the mind of a new convert. I regret that I cannot convey to you the impression I desire, without these preliminary words of a merely personal history. But as those who have lived all their lives in the midst of beautiful scenery are sometimes indebted to strangers for detecting some peculiar features of interest which had escaped the familiar eye, so it may be that one who approaches our holy religion from without may some times aid those who have always lived in the midst of it in their appreciation of its marvels.

It is our high privilege as Catholic priests, that we do not enter upon our office abruptly, but advance towards it through a long avenue of preparatory introduction. We begin to sight it as soon as our vocation is sufficiently pronounced, and it grows upon the eye as we near it and enter, one by one, upon those different stages in our journey in which we acquire continually increasing helps towards

reaching the appointed goal. These consist in the progressive steps which students take in proceeding along their college course, the most decisive being that which lands them in the School of Theology. The last and most important stage in the great career is that of the ten days' Retreat which immediately precedes the several Ordinations, and eminently that which terminates in the Ordination of the Priest. During those days you follow to the letter the example of our Blessed Lord, who was wont to preface all great acts by silent and solitary prayer. You are then wholly withdrawn from earthly things, and have leisure, amid silence and with the advantage of other external aids, for contemplating, under all its various aspects, the new life on which you are about to enter. You go fresh from the fragrance of this holy retirement to the foot of the altar at which you are for the first time to offer the Adorable Sacrifice. You stand, alone or with others, invested with the symbols of the Orders to which you have been already admitted, and are presented by the priest at your side to the bishop, at whose hands you are to receive a higher than angelic power. He inquires whether you are known to be worthy of the trust about to be committed to you, and, on learning that you are so held to be, he answers, 'Thanks to God.'

Those present are then cited to object, if so be, to your fitness, and, no word of hindrance being interposed, the bishop proceeds to address the candidates on the responsibilities and duties of the Priesthood. Then follows one of the most impressive devotional acts of our worship, the chanting of the Great Litanies while those who are the chief objects of petition are prostrate on the ground. Prostration in worship is a practice peculiar to the Catholic Church, and she adopts it in the case, not only of her ministers and priests at Ordination, but of the bishop at his consecration, and the king or emperor at his coronation. It is an act more expressive than any other that can be conceived, of the absolute surrender of body, soul, and spirit to the power and will of the Creator. Some of you already know by experience, and others will know hereafter, with what thrilling effect, at that moment of profound humiliation, the voice of the cantors is succeeded by that of the bishop as he offers over you the triple petition for the several graces of benediction, sanctification, and consecration. The Litanies ended, the bishop silently imposes hands upon the candidates in succession, and is followed in this act by all the priests present. After offering two short prayers for the divine blessing, he breaks forth into one of those magnificent songs of combined

praise and instruction which are known by the name of Prefaces. He next invests the candidates with the stole, changing it from its character as a symbol of ministration as worn by the deacon, into that of a symbol of sacerdotal authority, as about to be worn by the priest, saying at the same time these beautiful words, 'Receive the yoke of our Lord, for His yoke is sweet and His burthen light.' He then imposes the chasuble, leaving, however, a portion of it to be unfolded at a later period of the ceremony, when the office of the priest receives its full development. Then he intones the hymn Veni Creator, and, while the choir proceeds to sing it, he anoints the hands which are to offer the Adorable Sacrifice, the right of offer which he afterwards conveys, by causing the newly-ordained priest to touch the sacred vessels, not empty, as in the Ordination of Sub-deacon, but containing the elements for consecration. Here there is a pause in the office while the celebrant proceeds with the Mass, and the newly ordained priests clear their hands of the consecrated oil. This is a moment which the consciousness of his vocation is apt to be imprssed on the priest, with almost overpowering sweetness. Behind him are all the anxieties and misgivings by which he had been haunted while that vocation was

still unassured, or while, though assured, it seemed to hang upon the possible chances of the future. Before him is the Priesthood, which its lofty powers and its soothing consolations, unalloyed, as yet, by the oppressive sense of responsibility or the painful retrospect of failure. Nor is the greatest of his privileges a matter of the future. There and then he is to be summoned to unite in the Holy Sacrifice, not as an assistant, nor even as a participant, but as a co-operator. Up to this point he has heard the Mass; henceforward he is to unite with the ordaining bishop in offering it. He is to take it up at the point where it passes from instruction to oblation, from oblation to consecration, and from consecration to communion. For once those portions of the holy rite, which the Church ordinarily wraps up in the gentle whisper of the celebrant, and in the devout contemplation of the assisting multitude, are bared before the people in all their unequal majesty, not excluding even the words of consecration themselves. The newly-ordained priests communicate as usual, and among the first words which greet them during their act of thanksgiving are those of our Lord, 'I call you not now servants but friends, because you have known all things which I have wrought in the midst of you;' to which the Church adds, Alleluia. Then the new

priest make a profession of their faith in the words of the Apostles Creed, and the bishop proceeds to complete their sacredotal powers by the addition of that of Absolution, which he conveys in the words, in which our lord conferred it on the Apostles. This power, as you well know, though radically inherit in the priest from the time of Ordination, is not called into exercise until he has received jurisdiction from the bishop. As the outward symbol of this power, the chasuble worn by the priest is now expanded. Then follows one of the most touching features of this sublime rite. The bishop, clasping the hands of the priest kneeling at his feet, addresses him in these words, 'Dost thou promise reverence and obedience to me, and to my successors?' On the priest replying, 'I do promise,' the bishop embraces him and gives him the kiss of peace. Before imparting the final Benediction to the newly-ordained, the bishop reminds the priests of the gravity of their office in these words: Forasmuch as that which you are about to handle is a thing of no small peril, I admonish you, my dearest sons, before you approach to the celebration of the Holy Mysteries, carefully to learn of other and well-instructed priests the order of the whole Mass and the Consecration, Fraction and Communion of the

Sacred Host.' To my own mind this latter admonition is not one of the least beautiful, as it is certainly not one of the least needful portions of the rite. It is an instance of that thoroughly practical spirit which is so peculiarily characteristic of the Holy Catholic and Roman Church, who in her sacred offices never seems to labour after effect, or to consult mere solemnity of language at the expense of utility. She has, in fact, a subject to deal with whose grandeur is in itself, and shines more conspicuously the less it is attempted to set it forth by the arts of rhetoric.

And now, my dear brethren, you may justly reproach me with having told you a tale which is as familiar to you as your household words. You well know these sublime offices, not by description merely, but by participation and experience. Yet I shall still have done something, if I have called to your remembrance that of which you will one day be not the spectators, but the subjects, and if I have succeeded in suggesting one or two thoughts which you may find useful in turning it to practical account. For the rest, will you excuse me for concluding in words of my own, written at another time, and in another connection, but in which I find some of the thoughts I have here given you more briefly

and clearly expressed than in any which I am at this moment able to command? I say of the priest awaiting his Ordination:—

The day is near at hand when grace from heaven
O'er his meek soul in copious streams shall flow;
And to his shrinking charge that power be given,
Whose worth it passeth Angels' ken to know.

Come, all ye Saints that gird the Eternal's Throne,
Haste to his aid, and hear his voiceless cries;
Speed ye his prayers, and make his suit your own,
As prostrate on the sacred floor he lies.

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Spirit, come!
With strength inspire him, and with light invest:
Guard Thou his steps, and make his heart Thy home,
And nerve his weakness with Thine Unction blest.

I read Thine answer in the light divine
That bathes his brow, what time the Pontiff's hand
Draws o'er his own the consecrating line
That bids his soul with conscious power expand.

Rise from thy knees, ordain'd a Priest of God;
Muse on the tokens of thine awful might;
But courage! 'Tis His livery and load,
'Whose yoke is gentle, and Whose burden light.'

The Kingdom of thy Lord is all thine own,
His boundless wealth the treasure of thy reign;
The Church thy Court, the altar-step thy throne,
The field of heavenly lore thy rich domain.

O guilt and shame ineffable, were sin
Those hands to sully, or those eyes ensnare!
Eyes which have drunk such glorious visions in,
Hands which are bless'd our present God to bear!*

*Lyra Liturgica. Ember Days of September.

# LECTURE I.

## *PREACHING.*

Væ mihi est, si non evangelizavero.—1 Cor. ix. 16.

What is meant by a good preacher? I will first consider some of the replies which this question would commonly receive, and then go on to answer it as I think it ought to be answered. By a good preacher, many persons mean a ready and eloquent writer or speaker, who is never at a loss for language, and delivers himself in an easy and graceful manner. Another class of critics will understand by the same term one who argues out his subject with ability, and brings his conclusions home to the intellect of his hearers. A third class will mean one who adorns his subject with a great number of striking illustrations and beautiful images which please the fancy, while the words by which they are expressed fall like music on the ear. Such are some of the definitions which will be given by persons of educated taste, while those of less cultivation and refinement will form their views on the same

question according to a lower standard. There is, doubtless, a certain amount of truth in all these replies, and no preacher would probably deserve to be called good, as the phrase is generally understood, who should be signally deficient in all or any of these characteristics. Yet, if we come to consider them more carefully, we shall find that none of them directly touch the work of the preacher, in that which is surely its end. The excellence of every work, philosophers tell us, is to be measured by the degree of its adaptation to the end for which it is designed. What, then, is the end of preaching? The infidel alone will deny that it is the salvation of the soul. To awaken the conscience to a sense of responsibility and guard the heart against the inroads of sin is as surely the end of preaching, as it is the end of a watch to denote the time; and it is as much beside the mark, if we only think of it, to call that a good sermon which, however beautiful in other respects, does not even aim at this result, as to call that a good watch which loses half an hour a week, because it happens to be contained in a richly ornamented case.

The answers we have supposed would be as proper for the description of a good orator as of a good preacher, or rather they tend to regard the good

preacher solely or chiefly in his oratorial character. They touch the composition of his address, but evade its subject. So far as the object of a preacher is to arrest and persuade his auditory, the conditions of his success will not be very different from those which apply to the case of any speaker in a popular assembly. Indeed, he may often derive advantage from studying the methods by which other orators win over their hearers, with the view of enforcing his own incomparably more important message. Yet, after all, it must be remembered that this message is not only important, but, as we may say, *sui generis;* and no definition can be adequate to its subject which does not recognise the essential difference between the object of the preacher and the object of any other orator. We must not, indeed, too severely criticise these popular accounts of pulpit eloquence, as though they necessarily implied a forgetfulness of the real object of all preaching, merely because they do not expressly advert to it, since they are true, or may be true so far as they go, and the omission of any reference to the one great end may be no more than the natural and wholesome reserve which deters us from obtruding solemn truths in companies which are either sufficiently aware of them, or incapable of appreciating them.

Thus, perhaps, we shall arrive by degrees at a better definition than any of those we have hitherto supposed. The best of all preachers surely is he, who, while deeply feeling the momentous nature of his office, and distinctly realising the truth of the announcement he is making, so expresses and so delivers himself as best to make his auditory share his own convictions in all their force and fullness. Of such an one, the great aim will be to make himself well understood; and, as a master of the art of rhetoric has observed, the first requisite towards conveying clear ideas to others is to have them ourselves. Clear thoughts will seldom fail to clothe themselves in clear language; and one of the worst faults which a preacher could commit, would be that of attempting to disguise confused ideas in an unmeaning and tawdry phraseology.

The first condition, therefore, of good preaching is that the preacher should be powerfully and habitually impressed with the importance of his office, and the greatness of his responsibility. He is entrusted with the message of salvation, and every time he delivers it he has it in his power either to promote or retard the object of his commission. He will seldom, if ever, address a religious assembly in which there will not be at least some persons who

suppose him to be in earnest, and who open their ears, if not their hearts, to what he says. I speak, of course, of religious assemblies made up wholly or chiefly of well-instructed or well-disposed Christians. When you come, my dear brethren, to enter upon your priestly duties, you will learn how much more impression what you say in the pulpit makes upon your hearers than you may now believe, or be always aware of even when you come to preach. It frequently happens to us to be reminded, in the course of our parochial ministrations, of observations made from the pulpit, perhaps almost casual, and such as we had quite forgotten, till thus brought to our recollection.

A good preacher, therefore, may be said to be one who, being deeply impressed with the greatness of his subject, means what he says, and says clearly what he wishes to say. Many persons seem to think that the excellence of pulpit addresses consists solely or chiefly in the latter of these qualifications; but with a view to their true end, the former is absolutely indispensable. It certainly does not appear any great thing to expect that a preacher should mean what he says, yet this condition of his success is by no means so common or so easy as we may at first suppose. To say that he must mean what he tells

his people from the pulpit is to say, in other words, that he must be personally and experimentally convinced of the truth and importance of all he utters, and desirous of giving his hearers a part in his convictions. Sincerity is sure to make itself felt, while hearers are very quick in finding out when we are not in earnest. I am all along supposing the case of parochial sermons intended to produce a practical effect. Of course there are also sermons which partake more or less of the character of essays, and these have their place and use in the Church. But sermons of this kind are purely exceptional, and not such as you, my dear brethren, at all events, for a long time, will have occasion to undertake. I repeat, that in such sermons as we all habitually address to our people, it is of the greatest consequence not to let our words outrun our convictions. We are all of us exposed to the temptation of eking out our subject with what are called platitudes, that is to say, commonplace observations, introduced, not because we feel them very deeply, or because we think our hearers require them, but because we consider that a sermon is not a sermon if it do not last at least half an hour. Better far is the address of fifteen minutes which the preacher delivers from the abundance of his heart, than that of an hour, in which he fills up

with commonplaces the gaps that occur after he has exhausted the subject which he had proposed to himself. When I say that the preacher should mean what he says, I intend that he should be especially careful to avoid exaggeration. I suppose that we ought never to enforce upon our people what we are not ourselves prepared at least to attempt. This rule will make us cautious of indulging in an over wrought and high-flown strain of exhortation, and will also guard us against the reproach of saying from the pulpit what our practice habitually contradicts.

The *reality* of preaching, by which I mean a certain just proportion between our utterances and our convictions, will be greatly assisted by an intimate knowledge of the character and wants of our people. This knowledge will tend to preclude sermons which may be very good in their way, and might be very useful to a different auditory, but which will fly over the heads of hearers who feel, and rightly feel, that they have no personal interest in them. It is sometimes thought a matter of regret that, owing to the fewness of our clergy in comparison with the amount of work to be done, we are not able to make such a distribution of duties among them as might relieve the preacher from any active share in parochial work. But I cannot help thinking that parochial expe-

rience of the greatest use in the pulpit, and that, if it were denied to us, there would be danger of our getting into the habit of preaching sermons which, while they might be more faultless as compositions, would be far less likely to tell advantageously upon our flocks. The Confessional, the Visitation of the Sick, and the ordinary intercourse between a priest and his parishioners, are aids the use of which can hardly be supplied, nor their benefit over-estimated. Of knowledge received in the Confessional the preacher can of course make no apparent use. But the more he sees of his people, and the more intimately he is acquainted with their particular difficulties of temptations, the better he will be able to address them with interest, and therefore with effect. In another and secondary way, his sermons will benefit by this experience. He will discover how best to make himself understood by his hearers; and where two modes of expression present themselves to him in the composition or delivery of his sermon, he will prefer that which he knows to be most on the level of their capacities of intelligence. Above all, he will be guided in his choice of subjects by a knowledge of their wants and dangers. He will warn the rich against the pride of wealth, and the great against the temptations of the world; while,

in all his exhortations to the poor, he will never forget the especial privileges which the Gospel has assigned to them, and the claims to indulgence which cannot fail to be created by the worldly privations and sufferings incident to their blessed estate. This adaptation of subjects to the circumstances of the auditory is a powerful key to influence; while the neglect of it not merely renders our exhortations useless, but exposes us to an unmerciful criticism. He who is in the habit of using up old discourses, or, worse still, of borrowing sermons from published volumes, will run the risk of declaiming against swearing and drunkenness before an audience of fashionable ladies, or against extravagance in dress or the superfluities of the table, before those who can hardly find means for providing themselves with food and raiment.

Next to meaning what he says, or, in other words, to the quality of deep religious sincerity, the most important requisite of the preacher is that he should convey to his hearers a clear and powerful impression of what he means to say. This result will depend partly upon the methodical arrangement of his materials, and partly upon the simplicity and power of his language. With regard to arrangement, there are certain common-sense rules to be observed which

almost naturally suggest themselves to every one who desires to make an effective address, and which we may all bear in mind without overmuch care for those technical divisions upon which professors of the art of rhetoric are apt to lay stress. Every one who makes an elaborate and well-studied speech will begin by laying down clearly the points he desires to establish. He will then proceed to unfold and enforce them one by one, and conclude by pressing them on his hearers in such a manner as to leave a deep persuasion of their truth and importance. But the highest refinement of art is to take the form of nature, and the preacher will aim at preserving these several features of his address without rendering the process unpleasantly evident. Nothing spoils the effect of a sermon so much as the look of artifice, whether it be artifice in the structure, or artifice in the composition. A sermon which consists of home truths inartificially strung together, is more likely to produce real effect than one which displays greater pains in the composition than strength in the matter or earnestness in the delivery. Yet a plan there should always be, and the rule I have given will be sufficient to suggest its proper form.

By no means the least important duty in the preparation of a sermon is the appropriate selection of

the text. Sometimes, indeed, the text is given us ready to hand, as when we found our pulpit instruction on the Gospel or Epistle of the day. And here I may observe that, for sermons at High Mass, I think no subject so appropriate as those which consist in clear explanations and practical enforcement of the didactic portions of the Mass. Such sermons strike me as the most respectful to the Holy Sacrifice itself; whereas long discourses on alien subjects seem as it were to cut the Mass in two; partly by their undue length, and partly by their tendency to divert the thoughts of the hearer into a new channel. Such sermons are best suited to the evening, or other time when the sermon is altogether independent of the Mass. Indeed, I wish our people could be got into the way of staying to hear a sermon after Mass is over, as they do so commonly in foreign countries. Where a sermon does not arise out of a given text, but the subject is determined first, and the text has to be chosen afterwards, the preacher will often find both his ingenuity and his knowledge of Scripture severely taxed to discover a verse or passage which appropriately, and as I may say neatly, expresses and epitomises his subject. Very good preachers often show great excellence in this department; not catching at some trite verse of Scripture which,

without being absolutely inappropriate to their subject, does not elucidate or epitomise it, but out of the great treasure-house of doctrinal and practical knowledge bringing forth, like the good scribe, something which is at once old in truth and new in the manner of enforcing it. The sermons of Dr. Newman, as they are models in other respects, so are they likewise in this. In fact, the sermon often derives as much illustration from the text as the text from the sermon.

We may take it as a matter of certainty, that the language of a sermon cannot err on the side of simplicity. I never heard (did you, my brethren ?) anyone find fault with a sermon for being too plain, but I have heard many object to sermons that they were hard to understand. You are sure to have plain people among your hearers, and it you have educated people also, remember that the educated can understand what is plain, but the unlearned cannot understand what is above them. You know the story of a celebrated French writer, who never published his compositions till he had read them over to his housekeeper. I do not recommend you to follow this precedent to the letter, but it suggests a very important rule to all those who either write or speak for the benefit of others. If the preacher keep in view the importance of his work, and the character and wants

of his hearers, he will be sure to speak plainly. But the moment he begins to think about himself, or what people will say of his sermon, he will be in danger of falling into an ambitious style, which, if it gain him praise will gain him only such praise as he may well deprecate before it comes, and despise afterwards. We often find persons who eulogise sermons of which they have understood scarcely a sentence ; indeed, they often eulogise the most those they understand the least. The people who talk least about sermons are generally those who are most touched by them. A word of commendation, indeed, from an ecclesiastical superior, or some one else whose opinion tells for much, is a compliment in which preachers and especially young preachers, may well take a harmless pleasure, as they often derive from it a legitimate and healthy encouragement. But, as a general rule, it may be said without exaggeration, that no praise a preacher can receive ought to give him so much satisfaction as the fact of finding in the Confessional, that some poor and docile member of his flock has done some good thing or shunned some evil, which would not have been done or shunned but for the impression made by something which he had dropped from the pulpit. No public speaker in the world possesses such re-

sources as the preacher. Lord Brougham once said to a Protestant of my acquaintance, 'Your preachers have points in their favour for which we lawyers would give a good deal. They have a prime case, a friendly jury, and no reply. Yet,' he added with emphasis, 'what work they do make of it!' We too, without adopting the great orator's professional phraseology, or joining in his pungent satire, may still acknowledge the force of his remark and endeavour to profit by it. We have the noblest of subjects, the most ample of spheres, and the most docile of audiences. We are provided with a complete armoury of weapons, and are masters of the situation. We have the angels for our spectators, and the saints for our advocates; the terrors of hell to barb our warnings, and the joys of heaven to gild our encouragements. We have the Catholic Church for our pillar and guide, with its strong guarantees of infallible authority, steadfastness, and indefectibility. We have her far-reaching history to confirm our precedents, and her boundless literature to supply our illustrations. We have hearers who hang on our lips, and imbibe our teaching, with attentive ears, into tender hearts. What then are we, my brethren, and what ought we to be?

And now, to come back to our opening question.

It seems to me that the best of all sermons will be that which forms the most faithful transcript of an habitually religious mind. That reality, or as I may call it, subjective truthfulness, is the secret of persuasion, is no more than was said of the masters of rhetoric in the days of classical antiquity. 'He,' says one of them, 'who would have me weep must himself be the first to grieve.' And a greater authority has ruled that the best condition of rhetorical persuasiveness is what he calls the ethical proof—that is, the impression of personal character stamped on the speech itself. These old heathens often take a common-sense view of things which put to shame the shallowness and flippancy of many a modern critic. But why should we travel beyond the words of our Blessed Lord, which in one brief sentence comprehend the whole subject? 'Bonus homo de bono thesauro cordis sui profert bonum. . . . . Ex abundantia enim cordis os loquitur.'*

* S. Luke, vi. 45.

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## LECTURE II.

### *DIFFERENT MODES OF PREACHING.*

Credidi, propter quod locutus sum.—Ps. cxv. 1.

In our last lecture we came to the conclusion, that the good preacher will first master the truth and importance of his message, and then declare it in the simplest and most natural form of words. With a view to this object, I urged very strongly upon you the duty of putting away from your thoughts, when you are preparing your sermons or preaching them, every consideration but that of the character and circumstances of the auditory you are addressing or about to address, and of your own obligation to do your best towards affecting their hearts and awakening their consciences on the subject before you. But I feel that I must insist again and again on this duty, not so much on account of its importance, which I am sure that you feel as strongly as myself, but because of the inducements to lose sight of it which beset us all on every side. To judge by the language in which

sermons are commonly spoken of in the newspapers, in society at large, and even in the immediate circle of our own friends and acquaintances, one would think that warnings against the seductions of sin or the delusions of the world, with other such like topics of a directly practical character, were matters quite subordinate to the object of gaining the applause of the many, and thus establishing the preacher's reputation. I have already said that the fact of estimating sermons by such a standard must not be taken as any necessary proof that these critics do not judge of them according to a higher and truer view of their character and end. This, however, does not make it the less probable that the preacher himself will be imperceptibly swayed by the current of opinion, more especially when we remember how sure that opinion is to find a response in the vain-glorious tendencies of our common nature. I do not, of course, mean that we should attempt to put down this or any other such manifestation of popular error in an arrogant or unbecoming way, but that we must turn a deaf ear to all language which is apt to divert our thoughts from the one and only object of all preaching into other and less wholesome channels.

I now come to a question which must necessarily precede all others of a practical nature, if not in the

order of arrangement, at all events in that of fact; I mean, that of the manner in which we are to bring our subject before our auditory. There are four modes of constructing a sermon. First, there is the purely *extempore* method. The phrase *extempore* is often but erroneously applied to all preaching without book. It applies, however, in point of fact, to such preaching only as is not merely without book, but unprepared; and, as the phrase has in many ears an unpleasant sound, it is important to confine it to its strict meaning. I need hardly say that I mention this mode of preaching without even mental preparation, only in order to warn you against it. I do not indeed forget that our Blessed Lord on one occasion not only permitted but recommended His Apostles to depend in public appearances on no other help than that which He would furnish to them in the emergency. But, besides that this advice was given with direct reference to the occasion of an appearance before public tribunals, it would be little less than a presumptuous fanaticismt o fall back on a promise made to the Apostles in days of special illumination, as a substitute for that personal care and circumspection which are the ordinary conditions of supernatural aid. Again, I do not lose sight of the fact that, even at all times, the priests

and servants of our Lord who are suddenly called upon to vindicate His truth under circumstances which preclude the possibility of preparation, and therefore allow no scope for the temptations of sloth, may expect to receive, and do often actually receive, assistance of the same kind with that promised to the Apostles in the days of persecution. Nor, lastly, would I wish to deny that very holy persons, in the constant habit of meditation, and free beyond the lot of ordinary priests from the distraction of the world, may dispense, to an almost indefinite extent, with immediate preparation in their public addresses, owing to the remote preparation secured by their habits of thought and the general tenour of their lives. But I am speaking all along of secular priests immersed in various external duties; and of them I say that, were they to go into the pulpit with little or no preparation, they might expect to find themselves deserted by the help on which they had relied, whether it were that of their own readiness and fluency of expression, or any other of a more supernatural kind.

I come, in the second place, to sermons delivered from a manuscript. To this mode of delivery the term reading might be applied more appropriately than the term preaching. It is very difficult to give

to a written sermon any other effect in the delivery than that which belongs to good and impressive reading, which is after all a thing very different from the effect belonging to an address delivered without book. A person who has his eye on his manuscript cannot fix it on those he is addressing without the danger of going astray from the words before him. He is, in like manner, crippled in the use of action tending to give expression or emphasis to his subject. Hence it is that the practice of reading sermons is very unpopular with Catholics; and even members of the Established Church, in which this habit was a few years ago almost universal, are beginning to lay it aside. It is generally felt that, for the reason already given, it is impossible to impart to a written discourse the power which is gained by the fact of having no words before us to cramp the free and effective expression of the thoughts. On the other hand, it is not to be forgotten that some hearers, and they by no means the least considerable, are more impressed by the depth and solidity of the matter than by the impressiveness of the manner. Once more: there are sermons which, from their character, depend far less on the delivery than on the thoughtfulness and care with which they are prepared. Such, for instance,

are those which approach to the character of Lectures, and especially lectures on controverted points of doctrine. The very word lecture points to something which is to be read and which aims rather at the conviction of the intellect than at the excitement of the affections. With due allowance, however, for these qualifications and exceptions, I do not think that the practice of reading sermons from the pulpit is to be recommended. No doubt, in the case of those who are unable to conquer a natural incapacity, or a rooted distaste for any other kind of pulpit address, this method presents a valuable opportunity of preaching without the drawbacks which they experience or apprehend. But I am convinced that the difficulties of addressing an audience without a book before us are far more under our control than we are at first apt to imagine ; and when I shall have disposed of the two remaining methods of which I have undertaken to speak, I shall return to the present subject with the view of offering you some practical suggestions upon it.

I shall now say a few words on the practice of learning sermons by heart, which is a sort of middle course between those of which I have just spoken. It certainly appears, at first sight, to combine the advantages of care in the composition with effect in

the delivery. But I am not sure that, like most middle courses, it does not unite the properties of the two systems between which it mediates, at some considerable cost of the characteristic benefits of each. A written sermon is one thing, and a preached sermon is another. I think that the writer of a sermon which he knows is to be preached *verbatim*, and not read, will be tempted to forecast his position as an orator, to the disadvantage of his position as a writer. I mean, that he will be more apt to consider how such and such phrases will tell in effective delivery, and what is their real value in themselves and apart from that contingent illustration. On the other hand, the preacher of a sermon previously written but not actually before him, will be apt to find himself still more hampered by the strain on his memory in having to reproduce an accomplished work, than by that on his eyes in having to recite a present composition. Should he think too much of the grace of delivery he will be in danger of losing the thread of his lesson; and every one knows how much harder it is to rectify a fault in recitation by memory than to recover our ground in an address where we invent as we go on. However useful, then, may be the practice of repeating previously written sermons as an exercise for the student, yet when he

goes on the mission he will probably be glad to take refuge in some mode of preaching which, while it will occupy less of his valuable time, will also be apt to tell with more effect on his auditory.

I come, in the last place, to that mode which, as it seems to me, is on the whole preferable to any other; I mean that of carefully preparing sermons, in skeleton as we may say, beforehand, and trusting to our natural powers of expression, improved by habits of training, for filling them out in the delivery. This plan, unlike both the preceding, seems really to unite the advantages of the two opposite methods, of using a manuscript on the one hand, and preaching without book on the other. It obviates the danger of shallowness and empty wordiness, which besets unprepared or ill-prepared preaching without book, while it secures the advantages of an off-hand delivery, without the embarrassment of writing with a view to it. The materials which we prepare to our hand may be reduced to order with any amount of care and completeness we may like to bestow on them, provided always that they are not reproduced in public by a mere effort of memory. I have heard that Father Faber was in the habit of writing out the greater part of his sermons before he preached them, and then of preaching them with such variety

of expression as was suggested to him at the moment. Others, again, equally eminent as preachers with himself, are in the practice of putting down the heads of their sermons, or a few of the more striking ideas, so as to leave a still wider margin to be filled up on what may be called the spur of the moment. All preachers who do not wish to go slipshod into the pulpit, must form their plan and possess themselves of their materials beforehand. This will be found a most valuable protection against the dangers of a wandering mind, and the necessity which ill-furnished orators find of eking out their addresses with commonplaces, or burdening them with tautology.

With regard to the more difficult task of putting these materials into effective shape at the time of delivery, the first piece of advice I would venture to give you is that, if you adopt the plan of writing out the whole or any considerable part of your sermon, you should be very careful to forget putting your manuscript into your pocket. I am not speaking of mere notes which may be useful to you in suggesting the order of topics, but of any such part of your composition as might supply you with the very words to be used. If, while you are preaching, you feel that this paper is at your command, you will be apt to hanker and fidget after it, instead of try-

ing to do your best in expressing the sense, not in reproducing the words, of what you have written. If, under the embarrassment occasioned by the act of comparing what you want to say in the sermon with what you have said in the composition, you should be tempted to search for the manuscript as a refuge in your distress, then farewell to all chance of preaching any such sermon as your hearers will not consider, and rightly consider, a mass of confusion. Even if you should find the wished-for document (which, perhaps, after all, may not be in the first pocket in which you look for it), then will follow the difficulty of hitting, all at once, upon the precise part of it to which you wish to refer. And lastly, after all this delay and bungling, you will have to resume the dropped thread of your discourse. I conclude therefore, that, since your written sermon is not likely to be of any use to you, and will probably prove a serious hindrance, you had much better make up your mind to leave it behind, though I do not deny that, to all but very experienced preachers, this is an act on which it requires considerable heroism to venture.

A still more valuable rule in preaching without book is to think as little as possible about ourselves; about the importance of success and the disgrace of

failure, with other such considerations as are not only very little to the point, but are the most likely ways of bringing about the consequences we deprecate. We are all apt to make the great mistake of imagining that other people think about us as much as we think about ourselves. The fact is, that self is the subject which too much engrosses us all ; and, as there are times in our own lives when we suffer from the want of sympathy which this fact induces, so there are others when, by a sort of providential compensation, we benefit by it. One of these is in our public addresses, which will generally be effective, just in the proportion in which our minds are fixed rather upon the intrinsic importance of our subject, than upon the mode by which we may best obviate the criticism of our hearers. In pulpit addresses, above all, we ought to have no temptation to this damaging propensity. When we remember the greatness of our work, and reflect that the one and only thing at which we should aim is to do our duty before Him who has called us to that work; we shall be apt to feel how worthless is any praise which is bought by forgetfulness of that first duty, how worthless any blame which is incurred in the conscientious discharge of it.

Another rule which I would offer to you is that of

trying to express your thoughts in simple rather than in elevated language. The phraseology of our sermons ought not to differ characteristically from that of our ordinary conversation on an important subject. When we desire to convince a friend of something which presses on our minds, and which we think it of great importance that he should know, we do not indulge in high-flown language, nor are careful to clothe our thoughts in graceful and well-rounded periods, but use the plainest words as those which are at once the most natural exponents of our own thoughts and the most likely to bring them home to the mind of the person we are addressing. It would not be easy to show wherein preaching, divested of rhetorical embellishments, is anything more than a mode of impressing on our hearers something which we feel deeply ourselves. If this be so, the same conditions which promote success in the ordinary dealings between man and man would seem to be those best fitted to secure the real object of that intercourse which is the most responsible in its nature and the most momentous in its results. I need hardly add how greatly the object we have in view will depend upon an intimate knowledge and careful use of the instrument by which our instructions are conveyed; I mean of course that

rich and pliant language of our country which, whatever advantages of some foreign languages it may want, is unsurpassed in its power of giving expression to plain and practical thought. The English language, as you know, is made up of its old Saxon elements with the addition of large importations from the South. As a general rule, the pure Saxon phrase is a better medium of honest and homely thought than its Gallicised or Latinised equivalents. But it is possible to err even on the right side; and the exaggerated use of either of the two ingredients of our language imparts to speech or writing a certain mannerism which is always to be avoided. On this subject, however, I shall have occasion to speak more at length in a future lecture. Whatever style of speaking is most natural to ourselves will probably be the most persuasive in preaching. Upon the due limits between graceful freedom and unbecoming familiarity I may have occasion to speak hereafter. I will conclude with one or two suggestions of a practical kind which may perhaps be found useful in the delivery of unwritten sermons. It is of the greatest importance, as I have before observed, to start with the foresight of a definite plan and orderly arrangement. Any neglect of this rule will be sure to result in a con-

fused and ineffective discourse, which whatever good instruction it may incidentally contain, will leave no lasting impression on the mind of the hearer. I think also that it is useful to commit to memory not any large portion of the sermon, but such parts of it as are especially important; since, although we may not give what we have prepared in the same words, we shall perhaps give it in words only varied from the original in a slight degree, and that generally for the better rather than the worse. I would especially recommend this course in the opening and concluding passages of the sermon. A Latin proverb tell us that he who begins well has accomplished half his task; and this is true in the case of public addresses. Yet more important is it, and quite as difficult, to end well; because the end it is which, as an other old proverb has it, crowns the work. It is just because preachers feel it to be so important that they sometimes flounder about in bringing their sermons to a close, or never seem to know when to end them. Once more: it is a very bad plan to correct as we go on words or phrases which are not inappropriate but only not the most correct or elegant. Their deficiencies are not so apparent to the hearers as to ourselves; and, at all events, produce a less unfavourable impression than

anything like hesitation or interruption. This is a fault into which elaborate and fastidious writers are apt to fall, from the practice of bringing into their oratory that 'labour of the file' which they are in the habit of employing in their composition. I remember one conspicuous instance in the case of a Protestant dignitary who was an elegant, though too artificial writer, but who, whenever he made a speech, was continually recurring from what he had said to what he would have preferred to say, so that his speeches represented a process of critical analysis rather than exposition and elucidation of the subject before him. After all, the great secret of oratory is perfect self-possession, and the key to self-possession is the absence of human respect. The man who is continually thinking about himself is almost sure to disappoint his audience; whereas he who thinks mainly of the importance of his subject will readily find words to give effect to his meaning. Self-possession is, in truth, often a substitute for rhetorical ability, while rhetorical ability is of little avail without it. It is true in pulpit oratory, no less than in matters more intimately connected with our well being, that he who makes the interior his chief concern, may safely leave the exterior to itself; whereas, to follow the reverse order, is to begin at the wrong end.

# LECTURE III.

## *DIFFERENT KINDS OF PREACHING.*

Sollicite cura teipsum probabilem exhibere Deo, operarium inconfusibiem, recte tractantem verbum veritatis.—2 Tim. ii. 15.

The kinds of preaching are more numerous than the modes; but, when we have once determined upon our mode, we shall proceed to employ it in giving effect to the different kinds of sermon which circumstances may require us to produce. It is obvi ous that these circumstances will vary materially according to the character of our audience and the nature of the occasion. The following will, I think, suggest itself as a comprehensive, if not exhaustive list of the different classes of sermons into which the work of the preacher, taken in its widest range, may be divided. There is, first, the sermon which comes in the course of the Mass on Sundays or holy days. Secondly, there is the sermon which forms a material if not principal part of what is improperly termed the *Service*, and which is usually preached at the

Vespers or evening devotions. Thirdly, there is what is called in France a *petite instruction*, or among ourselves 'a few words,' usually addressed on a weekday to a smaller and less promiscuous body of hearers than that which assembles on a Sunday or holy day. Fourthly, there is the Lecture, which is explanatory rather than hortatory or directly practical. Lectures, and sometimes also sermons, especially in the long penitential or festive seasons are usually given in courses. Fifthly, there is the Retreat Sermon, which, however, belongs rather to the office of the Regular than that to the Secular clergy, and so will not require any extended notice in this place. Sixthly, there is the sermon preached on particular occasions; as for example at the dedication of a church, at funeral obsequies, or for some special object of charity or devotion. This catalogue will be subject to further modification arising out of the condition and circumstances of the audience.

I have said in a former lecture that a sermon in the course of the High Mass should consist, as a general rule, of a short explanatory and practical application of the Epistle or Gospel of the day, and especially of the latter. There is no rule without an exception; but I think that long sermons on topics which have no immediate connection with the sub-

ject of the day, are out of place in the middle of Mass. Besides protracting the Mass to an inconvenient length, they tend to interrupt its continuity. This objection applies especially to long sermons and still more to irrelevant sermons on the greater festivals ; as for example on Easter-day, when the spirit of the Church is expressed by brief and brilliant scintillations of a joy too deep to be eloquent. For, as it has been somewhere said :—

> Joy, like grief, is simple-spoken;
> Each is cherished secret hoards ;
> Hearts when full, and hearts when broken,
> Veil their thoughts and stint their words.

On the other hand, nothing can be more appropriate as a general rule, than a short affective and effective commentary on that portion of the Mass which is designed for instruction, and which is really the only portion of it that seems to call for the aid of the vernacular. The Gospels especially, containing as they do the words and actions of our Blessed Lord, are full of suggestive matter for the preacher, and furnish him with the readiest and easiest, as well as most suitable, subject of his Sunday morning's instruction. Regular sermons, by which I mean discourses of a certain length and completeness, appear to deserve a place to themselves where they do not clash with the unity of the Holy

Sacrifice, nor are themselves cast into the shade by its transcendent lustre.

The evening audience of the preacher is usually composed of a class somewhat different from that of the morning. In London especially, it is the practice to expect striking sermons in the evening, and to come to church with a view to them. This is one of those national peculiarities which, whatever we may think of them, we must recognise in our ministrations, and turn the best we can to the uses of religion. Many persons who cannot conveniently come to High Mass regard it as some compensation for the omission to be present at Vespers; and when they have heard a Low Mass in the morning, they have no doubt so far sufficiently fulfilled their Sunday duties. Protestants too, who recognise no obligation in the matter, are far more apt to drop into our churches in the evening than in the morning, and thus is made up an assembly of more promiscuous character than that of the good and steady-going Catholics who regard it as a duty to come to High Mass, but who may be legitimately prevented from going out in the evening, though such are often found even in the late devotions. It is universal in our large towns to open Catholic churches for public worship in the evening, though whether for the

regular office of the Church or for popular devotions, depends very much upon the circumstances of the neighborhood. At the West end of London where late dinners are customary, it is usual to have Vespers in the afternoon, and popular devotions in the evening; whereas, in those parts of the metropolis where earlier habits prevail among the wealthier parishioners, it is usual to defer Vespers till the evening. In either case, however, the sermon forms a necessary and important part of the arrangement, and should take its character from the composition of the audience. Since that audience will consist in a great measure of the less educated class, the sermon should be plain and open to the understanding of all. Since it is addressed to those who have not many opportunities of hearing the Truth, it should be earnest, practical, and affecting. Since a certain, and perhaps considerable, portion of the audience may consist of those who are not Catholics, it should be expressed in such language they can comprehend; that is to say, be as generally intelligible and as little technical as possible, though of course without any compromise of strict Catholic Truth. Here I may say, once for all, that I do not advise you in such discourses to adopt a directly controversial tone. I do not say that we

should never preach controversial discourses; but I think that when we do, they should take the form of lectures rather than of sermons. It seems to me that the best kind of controversy in popular preaching that which, by giving a clear statement of true doctrine, indirectly condemns its opposite. The advantage of such indirect controversy is twofold, and obviates a twofold evil which belongs to the practice of pulpit polemics. When we attack Protestant belief or practice directly, we are apt to put our whole auditory into wrong dispositions. The unCatholic portion of it we hurt, and perhaps exasperate by a description of their belief which they will be likely to regard as inaccurate or exaggerated. To the Catholic portion, on the other hand, we are addressing ourselves in words which are of little practical use to them, and which they have a certain satisfaction, and not a very Christian one, in applying to their neighbours. If, however, we explain our own doctrines without any direct controversial reference, we at one and the same time instruct non-Catholics in what they do not know, and Catholics in what they should never be weary of hearing.

We come, in the third place, to that kind of discourse which is popularly known by the modest title

of 'a few words.' By this title it is meant to express that the discourse is not a long, elaborate, and systematic exposition of some great doctrine, or some moral or spiritual truth, but merely a short, earnest, and fervid address, to an occasional and perhaps limited audience. Such addresses are very suitable at the close of a Low Mass at which many poor persons have been present; and the more they can be delivered in the immediate and close presence of the hearers, the better probably they will tell upon them. In some churches, it is the practice of one of the priests, at the end of the most frequented of the early Masses, to go down from the altar to what is called the poor part of the church, and there address a few words to what he is sure to find a very attentive and deeply interested body of hearers. I would by no means insist upon what are called the well-dressed people being obliged or expected to remain for this sequel of the Mass. If they like to do so, so much the better. If not, let them retire as quietly as may be, and leave the priest to speak directly to the poor, for whom his addresses is more immediately intended. Another reason for allowing the attendance to be discretionary, is that some persons, especially servants, have only a short time allowed them for hearing Mass, and ought to be detained unnecessarily after having

fulfilled their obligation. Still, with due allowance for such exceptions, I believe that the priest who performs this duty with the requisite zeal and unction, will never want an attentive audience. Another suitable opportunity for a few words is the limited assembly of pious persons, such for instance as members of a Confraternity, on some evening of the week. A formal sermon delivered from the pulpit would then be quite out of place ; whereas a short instruction on some subject relating to the particular devotion of the Confraternity, or any other appropriate to the circumstances of the audience, will greatly tend to keep the true spirit of the association. In a choice of a subject, the preacher should of course prefer one which brings out the consolations and encouragements of holy living to those which urge upon sinners the motives to repentance. To the same class of discourses belongs that which is known in Italy under the name of *Fervorino ;* a very brief and animated appeal to an audience wrought to the pitch of high devotion by the circumstances of the moment; as for example a first communion, or the more striking and affecting incidents of a spiritual retreat or mission.

Next follows the Lecture or Course of Lectures. The essence of this kind of discourse is to consist ex-

clusively or chiefly of instruction rather than exhortation, and it is therefore addressed to the intelligence of the hearer rather than to his feelings. As this instruction almost of necessity implies the idea of a continuous series, the lecturer will of course have to choose some subject which from its nature admits of being treated in the way of succession. It is by no means necessary that the subject should be of a controversial nature; though, as I have already said, if controversy be conducted at all in the pulpit, a series of lectures seems to be the most proper mode of giving effect to it, and this for more than one reason. In the first place, the very character of the address requires that the subject should be treated in the way of calm argumentative decision, rather than of impassioned rhetoric. Again, it creates in the mind of an opponent the idea that he is being fairly and justly treated, when he finds that the objection to his view is stated gravely and at length, instead of being contained in a few sharp words, flung incidentally and at random. It also gives the lecturer time and opportunity to review his argument as he proceeds; to qualify over-statements, to correct misconceptions, and to profit in later lectures by criticisms passed on former ones. Perfect fairness towards an opponent is the imperative duty of a

controversialist. He must continually exercise that special form of Christian charity which consists in placing ourselves in the situation of others, and endeavouring to look on the question from their point of view. After all, however, I have touched on this branch of the subject rather because that subject could not otherwise receive anything like a complete treatment, than because I feel it to be one of much practical importance to those whom I address. Good controversial preaching and writing are as rare as they are valuable. Bad or defective controversy is unhappily anything but rare, and not only valueless, but highly damaging to the truth. To preach instructive but uncontroversial sermons requires no more than a knowledge of our own doctrine. On the other hand, to refute counter-statements requires also an accurate acquaintance with the views of an opponent; and, if we shall be found to have formed a mistaken notion of those views, we give him an advantage which will greatly weaken the effect of what is abstractedly true in the defence of our position.*

I pass over, for the reason already given, the Mission or Retreat Sermon; not because I think that such sermons should be exclusively confined to

* The reader will find some valuable remarks on controversial preaching in the Rev. T. Potter's learned work, 'The Pastor and his People.'

the Regular Clergy, but because it must at all events be a very long time before any of you are likely to be called to this arduous duty, and because I wish to confine myself rather to matters of a more immediately practical character. I shall, however, find under this head a convenient opportunity of redeeming my promise to say something of the difference between graceful freedom and undue familiarity in the pulpit. At missions and retreats, and occasionally at other times also, instructions are given in a colloquial rather than a didactic form; the preacher not so much haranguing the people as talking to them. This kind of address is quite exceptional, and allows of many licenses which would be out of place in an ordinary sermon. It gives scope for homely illustration, interesting anecdotes, imaginary dialogues, playful allusions, and even good-natured satire. It is a leaf out of the book of the dramatist, and requires somewhat of dramatic genius for its due effect. A style of pulpit oratory it is, in which foreigners excel; more especially Italians. They have a way of passing from the grave to the playful, and *vice versa*, which gives to their familiar addresses the charm of one of those exquisite masterpieces of instrumental melody in which the Adaigo and the Allegro alternate with each other; the one

grave without heaviness, and the other brilliant without frivolity. But I can by no means advise you, my brethren, to make essays in this department. The ridiculous does not tread more closely on the heels of the sublime than does the vulgar on those of the familiar; and hence it is, I suppose, that our great dramatic poets puts into the mouth of a father giving instruction to a son on entering the world the excellent advice, 'Be thou familar, but by no means vulgar.' A bad joke is painful enough everywhere, but in the pulpit it has somewhat of the effect of one of those ugly insects which occasionally find their way into the chalice at Mass, and are at once nauseous to the taste and offensive to piety. You must not, however, understand me to discourage minuteness of detail in sermons which are directed against particular faults; as for instance the extravagance of dress, or other luxuries of fashionable life, 'Fraus latet in generalibus,' and principles are of little use without illustration and example. Yet, here, too, I would earnestly caution you against bidding for a laugh, whether open or suppressed, in such descriptions. Warnings couched in such phrase as admits of their being diluted by ridicule are like homœpathic globules drowned in a tumbler of champagne. Leave then, I entreat you, this peculiarly

delicate branch of the preacher's duty to those experienced Religious who can handle it with judgment, and whose lives of constant prayer and heroic self-sacrifice give a point to their spiritual satire to which we seculars must not aspire.

For a reason similar to that which has led me to abbreviate this branch of my subject, I shall compress into a short space the remarks I have to make under the last head, that of the sermon on a particular occasion. Such sermons are for the most part assigned to preachers of considerable standing, although not so invariably as to dispense me from the duty of saying a word or two about them.

It is of course impossible to specify all the various circumstances under which what are called Occasional Sermons may have to be preached. Among the more usual are those of the dedication of a new church, or its anniversary; the commemoration of some particular Saint whose festival is celebrated with honour; the funeral or obsequies of some person of eminence, or whose memory is highly esteemed in the church where the sermon is to be preached; and lastly, the multifarious objects of Christian charity which are advanced by means of pulpit appeals.

With regard to the two first classes of sermons,

those appropriate to dedication or titular festivals, I have no other remark to make than that, for reasons given in another place, I think they ought to be always of a strictly festival character; by which I mean not lengthy and didactic, but succinct, spirited, and all to the point. They are preached on joyful occasions, and should be in keeping with the character of the day and the feelings of the audience. To sermons commemorative of Saints, it is usual to give the name of panegyrics, a title which suggests the propriety of selecting as their subject some characteristic virtue or work in the life of the Saint, rather than of making them the occasion of practical exhortation, unless indeed it be quite subsidiary and of a somewhat more recondite nature than usual. To the next class of sermons, those namely which are preached at funerals or obsequies, is also applied the name of panegyric. But I own it seems to me that in this instance the use of that name is more honoured in the breach than in the observance. One of the last things which those Christians who most deserve to be praised are apt to desire for themselves is that they should be made the subjects, or rather the victims, of an encomiastic oration. Of course there are exceptions to this rule; as in the case of eminent men to whom custom assigns such a compliment, or

of those who have justly endeared themselves to the memory of persons who would be disappointed by the absence of such a tribute. But, to preach a good funeral sermon, demands an amount of real sympathy and wise discretion not often found in combination. If it can be made in any way subservient to the spiritual good of the hearers, we may fairly presume that the departed friend who is the subject of it would not desire that his own dislike of posthumous commendation should stand in the way of such an object.

With regard, in the last place, to what are called charity sermons, a difficulty is apt to present itself to the mind of the thoughtful preacher. If he should say little about the particular subject of Christian charity on which he is required to preach, he will not probably do any great service to the institution for which he has to plead. If, on the other hand, he should dwell too exclusively on the merits of the particular cause which he advocates, he will run the risk of consulting its immediate interest to the injury of Christian truth in general, by leading his hearers to forget that, after all, almsgiving is not the whole of charity, nor putting half a crown into a collection-plate because you cannot very well avoid it, real almsgiving, nor the especial institution on behalf of which

he appeals the only charitable institution in the world, nor even necessarily the best of its kind. The preacher must keep clear of the difficulties by the help of his own good judgment. He will perhaps find it well to make the subject of his sermon somewhat more general than would be the mere advocacy of the object for which it is immediately preached, and not shrink from addressing at its close a special appeal to the feelings of his audience in favour of that object.

I have said so much on questions of a more or less technical character, that I have left too little space for dwelling on what may be called the remote preparation of the preacher: I mean of course those general habits of study or thought which form the materials of his work, independently of the special and immediate care employed in preparing for it. I need hardly insist, in the first place, on the necessity of an accurate acquaintance with his theology; a condition of his success which obviously does not depend merely upon acquirements gained in the course of his collegiate life, but upon his likewise keeping up habits of study as far as may consist with the more pressing calls of missionary duty. As another most important requisite, I would suggest an intimate knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, especially

those of the New Testament, though by no means to the exclusion of the Old. The mind of the preacher ought to be completely saturated with the language of the Bible, and so well stored with its subject as to find no difficulty in drawing on the sacred materials for illustration, whether by quotation of words of reference to facts. Lastly, I need hardly add in what inestimable importance towards the work of the preacher is the habit of meditation; that habit accustoms him to view both the theological and historical materials of preaching in the light most apt to render them interesting to his auditory. Meditation is the chief means of enabling us to regard religion habitually as a reality, and not as something merely conventional or professional. The habitual practice of it has thus a tendency to secure that deep and earnest impression of religious truth in the mind of the preacher, which is the best guarantee for a corresponding impression on the mind of the hearer. It is, I am sure, unnecessary for me to add, that the sermon ought not to be the direct object of the morning meditation. What I mean of course is, that he will be the best and most impressive preacher who is in the constant practice of meditating with a view to the ends of meditation in general.

## LECTURE IV.

### *ON WRITING AND SPEAKING ENGLISH.*

Omnis scriba doctus in regno cœlorum similis est nomini patrifamilias, qui profert de thesauro nova suo et vetera.
S. Matt. xiii. 52.

I cannot close the subject of preaching without saying a few words on the mode of writing and speaking the language in which we preach. It is not enough to write English correctly, unless, we also speak it correctly: and the former qualification does not by any means necessarily include the latter. We learn to write English correctly by studying the best models of English composition. But no rule can be given about speaking it correctly, except that of following the practice of those who are generally regarded as the best speakers. I will try to say something under both of these heads; although what I have to say about correct speaking must be chiefly confined to pointing out a very few of the more frequent mistakes into which English speakers are apt to fall.

With regard to English composition, the best rule I can give you is to cultivate simplicity. The tendency of all young writers is to contract an ambitious style. They feel, and feel rightly, that there is a certain difference between written and spoken English. But this difference they are often disposed to exaggerate. There are many colloquial modes of expression which are too careless and inaccurate to be introduced into a formal address: but of the two it is far better that preaching should err on the side of freedom than it should err on the side or stiffness and over-precision. In conversation we say, and say most properly, 'here' for 'hither,' and 'there' for 'thither,' 'can't' for 'cannot,' 'don't' for 'do not,' and many other things which will not bear scrutiny, but studious avoidance of which would be nothing less than pedantry and affectation. The more correct and unabbreviated forms of such colloquialisms are most proper for set speaking, and may be introduced into it without any sacrifice of simplicity. But whereas an ambitious and grandiloquent phraseology can never be tolerated in any preaching, there is nevertheless a style of discourse in which colloquial modes of speech are not only admissible, but graceful and appropriate.

With a view to simplicity in English composition,

the use of such words as are of Saxon origin is greatly to be preferred to that of those which are derived from the Latin, and have come to us by importation from France. This rule, however, is subject to some modification. It is a principal excellence of style to choose such words as most precisely denote our ideas; and, if it should happen that an idea is less naturally expressed by a Saxon word than by its Latinised or Gallicised synonym, it would be a mistake to prefer the former merely because it is not the latter. Again, it is of great importance to avoid anything like pedantry or mannerism in our style of composition. A rigid adherence to words of strictly English origin, and especially to such as are more or less obsolete, might easily cause a style to err in these respects. Under these qualifications, however, I would advise you, *cæteris paribus*, to select native in preference to exotic terms; as, for instance, 'worship,' rather than 'veneration,' 'trustworthy' rather than 'credible' (and far rather than that wretched substitute 'reliable,'*) 'business' rather than 'occupation,'

*This word is to my mind objectionable because it is at once novel and unnecessary. The fine old Saxon word 'trustworthy' is applicable alike to persons and to things, and therefore answers every purpose of its modern substitute, the formation of which, although possibly defensible, is certainly awkward and anomalous.

'greet' or 'hail' rather than 'salute,' 'wondrous' rather than 'marvelous,' 'make over' rather than 'assign,' 'friendship' rather than 'amity,' 'neighbourhood' rather than 'vicinity,' 'kind' rather than 'clement,' and so on. There is a certain downright and honest character about our native language which makes it a peculiarly valuable medium of thought. Foreign importations in language sit as awkwardly on our forms of speech, as foreign importations in dress or manners upon our social habits. Yet, after all our language has been so modified by such introductions, as to render it impossible to avoid them without narrowing the range of its vocabulary within limits incommensurate with the necessities of expanding thought and civilization. Every year is adding new materials to that vocabulary. The railroad, the electric telegraph, and other similar inventions of modern times, have tended to increase the bulk of our dictionaries, and have left Dr. Johnson far behind the wants of the age; though the more we examine his mighty work, the more we shall be impressed with the labour and care taken to secure its completeness as a magazine of the words known to our forefathers. But to return to the subject of a characteristically English style. It is only necessary to read a single page of the works of writers justly

considered as models, in order to see how impossible it is so completely to Anglicise our style as to keep clear of words not of strictly English origin.

The style of Dr. Johnson himself is the most conspicuous specimen of a style formed on the Latin or Gallic model: and, however beautiful from the happy selection of epithets, and rhythimical in the construction of its sentences, is not looked upon as a model for imitation. The most memorable instance of the contrast which it presents to the simplicity of the Saxon phraseology, is found in the celebrated definition of 'net-work,' contained in Johnson's Dictionary. 'Net-work' he defines as 'anything reticulated or decussated with interstices between the interceptions.' At Oxford, this definition used to be quoted as a flagrant specimen of bad logic, inasmuch as it is certainly far less obvious than the thing defined. Moreover, in the word 'reticulated' it does no more than repeat that thing in a synonymous term, though far less generally intelligible than itself. After all, however, it is much easier to quarrel with Dr. Johnson's definition than to suggest a better. The fact is, that a great many words are far more simple as they stand than any explanation can make them; and such words constitute the principal difficulty of the lexicographer. In

this place, however, I am not concerned with this definition in its logical but in its philological character, as representing by words of exclusively Latin origin a term which conveys its meaning to every one possessed of common sense in a purely English phrase.

The contrast between a Latinised and Gallicised and an English style is brought out, and by no means attractively, in our own religious books of the last or earlier part of the present century. In them we find words or phrases which are not only of foreign origin, but have never been naturalised in the English language; such, for instance, as 'to diffide,' instead of 'to mistrust;' 'delectation,' instead of 'delight,' or 'pleasure;' 'in fine,' instead of 'lastly,' or 'in conclusion;' 'in our regard,' instead of 'in reference,' or 'relation to us;' 'amiable,' as the translation of 'amabilis,' whereas it has acquired a somewhat different popular meaning; 'dolorous,' for 'sorrowful;' 'pious,' for 'compassionate' with others of a similar kind. I am not myself one of those who feel any repugnance to our earlier books of devotion in consequence of these peculiarities of phrase; nor have I any wish to see words or expressions of a more elegant description substituted for them. It is infinitely more important not to break in rudely upon the phraseology of popular

devotion, than to reform our devotional language according to a standard of purer taste. Moreover, there are certain words in Catholic use which have acquired what logicians call a secondary intention, and are thus probably the best which could be used for their purpose. Such, for instance, is the word dolours, as applied especially to the sorrows of our Blessed Lady; nor is there any one, I suppose, who would desire to see that word replaced by one in more general use. For much the same reason, I feel no objection whatever to epithet 'amiable' as applied to the Blessed Virgin in the received translation of her Litany; nor indeed do I see how it could be changed for any other of like meaning without disadvantage. The only synonym which thoroughly corresponds with it is 'loveable,' and I do not think that many Catholics would approve of such a substitution. Yet the same epithet when applied, as we sometimes find it in our earlier devotional books, to Almighty God, certainly grates somewhat upon the feelings. There is no similar reason for retaining such phrases as 'in fine,' 'in our regard,' &c., which are mere translations from the French, and peculiar to the idiom of that language. What say you to the '*Invention* of the Cross?' This is indeed an extreme instance of a

foreign word imported into English. The word 'invention' is not merely a purely Latin word, but has come to mean, in our language, something quite different from a finding or discovery; and the 'Invention of the Cross' would be generally understood to mean the original designing of that instrument of torture, which is certainly not what we mean to commemorate in the festival instituted in honour of St. Helena's discovery. Yet even a word so distorted from popular use may conceivably become a legitimate exponent, in its secondary sense, of an ecclesiastical idea, supposing it to be generally received in that sense. It is very evident how this exotic style came to be contracted by our earlier Catholic writers. They had, for the most part, received their ecclesiastical education in France; and nothing could be more natural than that, when they came to write in English their composition should bear the character of a translation. Moreover, during their absence from this country, and their estrangement from our national habits of thought and expression, our language had undergone those gradual and almost imperceptible changes which result from the influence of thought upon words. The word 'amiable,' for instance, which, to a foreigner, or one little conversant with English forms

of speech, would have seemed the obvious translation of 'amabilis,' had grown up into a meaning far less extensive, and had come to signify the characteristic of a pleasing and engaging disposition, rather than of the quality which inspires the sentiment of religious affection. It is, however, one thing to excuse and vindicate this unidiomatic phraseology, and quite another to recommend it as a model for imitation; and, in adverting to it, so far as my present business is concerned, I have only been anxious to guard you against supposing that, in venturing to criticise it, I am insensible to the grounds on which it may be defended, or share what seem to me the somewhat fastidious objections which are often brought against it.

I will close this portion of my subject by giving you original specimens of the two different kinds of English style as applied to the expression of the same sentiment. That of the style which I dislike shall not be by any means an extreme instance.

'We are all inclined to exaggerate our insignificant merits, while we are as studiously anxious to depreciate our numerous transgressions and deficiencies.'

There is nothing very bad in this sentence. But the following representation of the same sentiment is a great deal better:

'We are all prone to overrate our puny merits, while in the same spirit of self-love we set too little store by our many sins and shortcomings.'

Once more:

'The celestial spirits who presumed to raise themselves into the attitude of hostility against the Supreme Creator, were not merely dethroned from their state of lofty eminence in his kingdom, but were expelled from it, and consigned to the fiery abyss, there to experience, through infinite ages, the effects of their ungrateful rebellion.'

This, I admit, is a somewhat less favourable specimen of the ambitious style, yet not worse than what I have sometimes read or heard. The following is an attempt at a simpler rendering of the same ideas:

'The angels who dared to rise up in enmity against the Most High, were not only cast down from their lofty estate in His kingdom, but were driven from it into the lake of fire, there to pay, through ages without end, the penalty of their thankless rebellion.'

I now quit the subject of style in general, and pass on to consider certain faults of expression into which writers are apt to fall, whether in composition or conversation. In what follows I must necessarily confine myself to a very few instances of the faults

in question, since to enumerate them all would be quite impossible even in a course of lectures, and could not be attempted without absurdity in a single one.

Perhaps the commonest of all the difficulties which beset inexperienced writers or speakers, are those which hang about the two words 'lie' and 'lay.' Bear in mind, once for all, that 'lie' is an intransitive and 'lay' a transitive verb. What seems, however, to increase the difficulty is that 'lay' is not only the present tense of the transitive verb but the preterite tense of the intransitive. It must be admitted that this involution is at first rather puzzling, and how foreigners contrive to master the English language in spite of this and other like intricacies, has often been to me a matter of wonder. I do not suppose for a moment, my brethren, that any one of you ever says 'he *lays* in bed,' and so on, but you will find a good many people who do say this, and will known how to correct them. It has sometimes occurred to me that the practice of saying 'lay' instead of 'lie' may have grown up through an instinctive dislike of using a word which sometimes bears a very ugly sense. Be this as it may, there can be no doubt that the practice is, in its way, quite as ugly as the word. The best remedy against it

which I can suggest is, to make an occasional exercise of conjugating the two verbs 'to lie' in the sense of 'to extend oneself in a horizontal position,' and 'to lay' in the sense of 'to deposit.'

A difficulty which you will probably find more practical than the former is that of putting the little word 'only' in its proper place in a sentence. The mislocation of it may change the whole meaning. Here are specimens. 'I only spoke on that occasion.' This implies an emphasis on the 'I,' and would mean that no one spoke but yourself. 'I spoke only on that occasion.' This would imply an emphasis on the word 'spoke,' and would mean that you did not express yourself in any other way, as for instance by writing. 'I spoke on that occasion only.' This would imply an emphasis on the word 'that,' and would mean that you did not speak on any other occasion.

'Not only;' this phrase is often misplaced. 'He *not only* pursued his object with zeal but with success." This sentence perhaps does not strike you as incorrect, but it is so. You ought to say, 'He pursued his object *not only* with zeal but with success.' 'Not only' and 'not less' are phrases which require caution, for they are the symbols of those two perilous figures of speech, the climax and the antithesis.

It is the merit of a climax, as I need not tell you, to rise gradually from something less to something more important; and where it fails to do this it sinks into a pathos; and, like a false step on a ladder, brings you to the ground. For instance: 'By his disinterested heroism, he not only commanded the respect of his admiring countrymen, but succeeded in obtaining a good situation in the police.' Here you see that your 'not only' required you to advance upon the praise of commanding the respect of his countrymen, instead of sinking into something which is far less honourable. We must also be on our guard against the rock of a false or defective antithesis. I remember a man at Oxford who gave his name to a form of speech which is represented by an extreme instance in the following sentence: 'He pursued a policy not less injurious in its consequences than disastrous in its results.'

I come, in the last place, to the question of speaking English correctly, which is not necessarily involved in the fact of writing it well. Nevertheless it is one of extreme importance; for the most beautiful composition is fatally damaged by mispronunciation. Correct speaking is called in technical language by a word derived from the Greek, 'orthoepy;' and bears to speaking the same relation

which orthography bears to writing. Here, again, I can do no more than point out one or two of the most flagrant and customary violations of propriety. The first which I shall mention is the practice of not aspirating the 'H,' which, of all flaws in pronunciation, is one of the most serious, and, more almost than any other, stamps the speaker with the note of vulgarity. I do not deny that the English public is somewhat too hard upon this foible, which certainly comes, at least among Catholics, from the same foreign traditions which have served to affect our style of writing. It is not the genius either of the French or Italian language to aspirate the H; and those who have been educated, like so many of our own clergy, at Rome or in France, find it hard to acquire a pronunciation to which in early years they had been unaccustomed. Nothing, indeed, is more difficult than to break ourselves of habits of incorrect speaking, especially in the case of words which constantly recur. For a long time, we shall be apt to show that the right pronunciation is unfamiliar either by giving it with too great an emphasis where we advert to it, or failing to give it at all where we do not. Let it then be borne in mind once for all, that there are but four words in the English language in which the H is not aspirated:

1. 'hour;' 2. 'heir;' 3. 'honour' and its derivatives; 4. 'honest.' To this list are sometimes added 'hostler,' 'herb,' and 'humble,' but I cannot admit the exceptions. 'Hostler' is quite as often written without the 'H' as with it, but when written with the 'H' should, as I think, receive the aspirate quite as much as its correlatives 'host,' 'hotel,' and 'hostelry.' 'Herb,' is now generally aspirated by the best speakers, and the same may be said of 'humble.' There is a fault quite as great as that of leaving out the 'H' where it should be sounded: I mean the practice of putting it in where it should not. But this is a far less common fault than the other, and belongs to the class of provincialisms with which I am less concerned.

The only remaining solecism in pronunciation of which I have room to speak is that of adding an *r* to words ending in *a*, when followed by a vowel. This is a vulgarism peculiar, I believe, to London, but quite as offensive as the last mentioned. You sometimes hear in the Litany, whether said or sung, 'Regina [*r*] Angelorum,' 'Regina [*r*] Apostolorum.' I mention these things only in order that you may bear them in mind, and correct such faults in others as the occasion arises.* The prejudice which they

* See Dean Alford's brilliant little work, 'A Plea for the Queen's English.'

excite is quite disproportionate to the importance of the fault. But it is our duty to take care that our religion suffers nothing even from the groundless or over-fastidious criticism of its friends.

Let me conclude this part of my subject with pointing out one or two more breaches of good speaking which may occasionally come before you. Did we follow the rules of prosody, or analogy, we should accentuate the second, and not the first syllable of such words as 'mischievous,' 'admirable,' 'lamentable,' 'compromise,' and such like. We should also use 'bet' as the past tense of the verb 'to beat,' and I have heard it so used. But the practice of the best speakers, as I have already told you, is the only infallible rule; and this practice justifies 'beat' as the past tense of 'to beat,' and favours the accentuation of the first instead of the second syllable in such words as those above specified; although there is no other conceiveable reason why we should not in the same way anticipate the accent in the words 'deplorable' or 'detestable.'* One or two more mistakes occur to me at

*One of the most remarkable instances of the tyranny of custom over both prosody and analogy, is the case of the word 'adjacent,' which is usually accentuated on the second syllable, even though short in the corresponding Latin; whereas, in other cases, as in 'lamentable,' the accent is anticipated, even though the second syllable be long.

the moment, which I think are peculiar to ourselves: 'wishful' for 'anxious' or 'desirous,' and '*ou*dacious' for '*au*dacious,' which latter vulgarism comes of introducing our mode of pronouncing the Latin into an English word of Latin origin.

I will add some instances of our popular phraseology which are far more objectionable than the preceding, because they involve a certain compromise of principle. These instances belong indeed to the class not of grammatical solecisms or oral mispronunciations, but of popular misnomers, and so they have only a remote bearing on my present subject. I refer to them, however, in this place, because of their serious importance, and because no better opportunity for noticing them is likely to occur. They are the legacies of an age of humiliation to an age of revival, and are tolerable only where they serve to obviate greater evils than themselves. Thus our excellent fellow-Catholics of the sister island often call our churches 'chapels,' and those of the Establishment 'churches,' which would certainly puzzle an inquirer who should attempt to apply St. Austin's test for the discovery of the true religion. They are also apt to call priests 'clergymen,' sacristans 'clerks,' and sacristies 'vestries;' and I am not sure that they do not manifest a further proof of condescension

to the religious communion which till lately was dominant among them, by giving the name of 'prayers' to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. There was a time when such economical phrases were necessary and wise. But that time is happily at an end, and now it is wiser as well as more honest to call things by their right names. Hence, for my own part, I greatly dislike to hear the Church of my allegiance called the 'Catholic body,' and our fellow-Catholics our 'co-religionists,' and our spiritual charges 'congregations,' and the Mass a 'service.' As to the word 'denomination,' I suppose we must submit to it since our Protestant Government will have it so; and, in deference to the same authority, I suppose we must call our priests 'ministers,' though, in ecclesiastical language, this word is not properly applied to any order higher than the diaconate. However, I am not, as you may see, laying down any law on this subject; while yet I think you will agree with me that we ought to be cautious about giving in unnecessarily to a mode of speaking which has a tendency to react upon our mental habits.

With a very few words on the importance of good reading I will close this lecture. Priests who do not read their sermons, are yet often called upon to

read in public. Every Sunday they have to read the Epistle and Gospel in English, sometimes a meditation, sometimes a pastoral, and of course very commonly English devotions. On all these occasions, the effect of what they utter depends mainly on good reading. By good, I do not mean laboured or artificial reading, or such reading as betrays a forced attempt to be impressive; but that which is distinct, measured, intelligent, and forcible. I think that, when you come upon the mission, you will find no reason to regret the pains you may have bestowed on the cultivation of this practice during the years of your preparation.*

*See appendix.

# LECTURE V.

## *THE PRIEST IN HIS RELATIONS WITH THE YOUNG.*

Effusum est in terra jecur meum super contritione filiæ populi mei, cum deficeret parvulus et lactens in plateis oppidi.
LAM. ii. 11.

THE connection between the last four Lectures and that which I am about to give you is found in the subject of catechetical instruction, which is a kind of preaching, although peculiar both as to its character and object. Its peculiarity consists in being conveyed chiefly in the interrogatory form, and springing in part out of the answers it elicits, as well as in being addressed to the young, or those supposed to be imperfectly acquainted with the rudiments of religion. We are thus brought at once into the relations in which the parish priest stands towards the younger members of his flock; whether those formally under education, or those who, although they have ceased to attend school, are not sufficiently matured in the knowledge of

their duties to be left altogether without the aid of special care and more perfect training. I will begin with the subjcet of catechetical instruction as a branch of the priest's work in the department of education, and what I may say as to the manner of conducting it must be understood to apply to the teaching of children and young persons in general, so far as it falls within the province of missionary or parochial responsibility.

There are three great requisites towards the success of all instruction addressed to children and young people. 1. It should be simple in itself and expressed with great clearness of language. 2. It should be conveyed in a kind and considerate manner. 3. It should be such as to engage the attention and excite the interest of those to whom it is addressed. A few words under each of these heads will be sufficient to explain them.

1. Instruction to the young should be simple and clearly expressed. The Church catechism will be its text book; and if we succeed in conveying to the mind a clear idea of the truths there taught, nothing more will be needed towards furnishing the young Christian with all the doctrinal knowledge necessary to an ordinary Catholic. In the first place, the catechist will make a great point of the very words

of the catechism being accurately and thoroughly known. These words have been carefully devised as the best and simplest that could be found for unfolding the sense of the doctrine to be taught, and for impressing it on the memory. It is not necessary to add, how easily these advantages may be lost by the slightest change or omission. Many a convert has found reason to regret that he did not, before or at the time of his conversion, commit the Catholic Catechism to memory; and it is the fact of having been compelled to do this as children that gives born Catholics an advantage such as those converts only can share who consent to become children for the second time. But when the catechist has succeeded in getting the very words of the catechism into the minds of his little auditory, his next and more difficult task will consist in getting those words understood as far as the limited capacities of his disciples will admit. For this purpose, he will put the questions into different shapes until at last he hits upon the form which seems the best fitted to convey his meaning. He will never take for granted that he is understood, without clear proof to that effect, for it is hardly possible to estimate at too low a rate the power of children to apprehend a subject which does not come home to their sensible experi-

ence. They will require not only to have it made plain to them once in a way, but to have it continually pressed, and as it were engraven on the memory.

2. The next requisite towards the success of all instruction addressed to the young is, that it should be conveyed with the utmost kindness and gentleness of disposition and manner. It is impossible to overrate the importance of these qualities, not merely in their tendency to engage the affection and confidence of the children, but in the power which they exercise over their intellectual nature. Many a child of a timid and diffident character who, by tender and considerate treatment, might have been encouraged to make the best of his intellectual powers, has been paralysed and stupefied by a harsh and overbearing manner on the part of his teacher. The preservation of a kind temper and conciliatory manner, under the temptations to which all teachers are exposed from the dullness of many a scholar, constitutes of course one of the greatest difficulties in the work of education. Still, it is this triumph of principle over nature which brings with it its earthly reward in that reciprocity of confidence which is the best guarantee for the success of our efforts. There are two great mistakes which we are all apt to make in the treatment of poor children under education.

The first is to forget that they have feelings, and the second to forget that they have characters. It is a cruel error to imagine that those who are born in a lower condition of life, and are inured to the hardships of poverty, are devoid of those natural susceptibilities which we sometimes associate exclusively with the circumstances of birth and luxury. From such susceptibilities indeed as belong to an artificial state of society the poorer and humbler classes, to their own great advantage and happiness, are comparatively free. But from such as are incidental to our common nature they have no special exemption. They do not like, any more than we, to be browbeaten, or sharply taken up with the ease and power which cleverness and readiness of speech can always assert over slowness and bashfulness. Again, as the children of the poor have their human sensibilities, so likewise have they their specialities of disposition and character. They require to be treated, not in the mass, but as individuals. The same treatment which will be meat to the forward and conceited will be poison to the modest and timid. I cannot help fearing that our public examinations, salutary and necessary as they are in their own way, have a tendency to give intelligent forwardness an undue advantage over constitutional diffidence, which,

unless carefully watched and counteracted by the habitual efforts of those to whom the daily conduct of our schools is entrusted, may be the source of moral evils for which intellectual prowess and professional success will be but a poor compensation. It is precisely such dangers as these which demand the constant vigilance of the priest. The great moral heresy of our day is to try education merely by an intellectual standard; and we Catholics must not consider ourselves to be free from all risk of this pestilential opinion, because it is opposed to our approved theories. This part of my subject, however, belongs to a later stage of my lecture, and I hasten to complete the present division of it by remarking, in the third place, on the importance of making instruction for the young as attractive as possible.

3. This object will be gained, partly by the manner of the teacher, and partly by the matter of his instruction. I have already dwelt upon the absolute necessity of kindness and gentleness. The more the teacher puts himself for the time being upon a level with the scholar, the more he will set the scholar at his ease, and draw out the knowledge he possesses on a given subject. All this I am convinced may be done without the slightest compromise of true dignity, or surrender of just authority. But kindness, though

important, is not enough. No instruction can be interesting to the young which is not imparted with interest and vivacity. Heaviness of manner and a drawling, prosy mode of utterance are especially infectious, and will make the brightest spirits dull, and the dull still duller. Here, as in so many other instances, we see the great importance of priests entering heartily into their duties, and bracing themselves by a vigorous effort against the tendencies of habit and routine. The lively and earnest manner which comes of interest in his work will almost stand the teacher in the stead of that felicity of diction and facility of illustration which are means of attracting the pupil not within the reach of every one. Indeed, the faculty of catechising is quite a special gift, possessed by some priests in an eminent degree. Yet it is not so much a matter of nature as not also to be, to a very great extent, within the scope of personal effort. It will be largely promoted by affectionate intercourse with the children of the poor, and by learning the ways by which their understandings are most easily acted on and their interest most powerfully engaged. Among the external helps to it, I may mention especially that of familiar acquaintance with the Lives of the Saints. The Lives of the Saints are a storehouse of anecdotes by

whioh almost every practical subject may be illustrated, and which, from their freshness and simplicity go directly to minds which are not as yet erected into the attitude of criticism, and to hearts as yet unsophisticated by the blighting influences of the world.

We have hitherto been occupied exclusively with the work of the priest as it relates to the instruction of the children committed to his care. But instruction, as you are well aware, forms but a part, and by no means the chief part, of education, as a Catholic understands the import of that word. A well-instructed child may be very ill-educated in all that concerns the real object of education. He may maintain his place at the head of his class, receive the praises of Inspectors, and carry off prizes at the annual exhibition, and yet be surpassed in humility, modesty, and other Christian virtues, by many a child who enjoys none of these distinctions. It will be the duty of the priest to supplement these literary encouragements with their Christian helps and correctives. Towards this object he will possess especial advantages in such occasions as preparation for Confirmation and First Communion, and in the periodical instruction of the Confessional, which brings him into those immediate personal relations with the

members of his flock, so valuable towards enabling him to deal with them according to the peculiar characters and circumstances of each.

A most important branch of true Catholic education consists in attaching children to the Church, and interesting them in all that pertains to its sacred offices. No valuable system of education will fail to address itself to the affections and to the imagination. If we attend to the intellect only, and leave the imagination uncultivated and the affections at large, we shall be like the master of a family who, so long as he can make himself comfortable with his friends up-stairs, takes no thought of the servants upon whose honesty and attachment he depends for the necessaries of life. The world would be quite willing to give up to the Church the direction of the intellect, if it could but bargain for the disposal of the affections and the control of the imagination. The priest will certainly give his help to this ruinous compact, who acts upon the notion that education consists in the mere business of school hours. As children grow up, the world addresses itself to their natural inclinations in ten thousand different ways which it is the office of the Church to anticipate and counteract by giving them worthier objects of interest and attachment. The ceremonies of our

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holy religion, and its various devotional practices, have a power to enlist the sympathies of youth which is known to those only who are intimately acquainted with the habits and tendencies of that impressible age. Many of you can remember the intense pleasure which you derived in former days from serving Mass, or assisting at processions or Church offices. In your case this pleasure was one of the auguries of an ecclesiastical vocation. But, even where it falls short of this happy result, it forms in after life one of those delightful reminiscences which serve in a measure to bind the soul to that Creator of whom the Psalmist so beautifully speaks as the God who maketh youth joyful.

To the priest whose heart is in his duties, the moral and spiritual education of children will be one of the most delightful portions of his work; and the earlier the age of his little disciples, the greater will be its attraction. Instead of having to act upon minds preoccupied with prejudices, or to address himself to consciences perverted by habits of sin, his simple teaching will make and leave its impression on the hearts of his hearers as easily as the signet on the heated wax. The longer he delays to take advantage of those capacities of impression which belong to the first bright years of innocence, the

greater will be the difficulties of his task. But it is sometime before the freshness of youth wears off, even under the corrupting influences of the world; and so long as it remains, it will give an advantage towards moral and spiritual guidance which will be wanting at a later period of life. Many priests have an instinctive attraction to youth, and an attraction it is which is no doubt given them from above as a correlative both to the need in which that age stands of support, and to the singular aptitude which it possesses towards profiting by the support it receives.

It is much to be desired that the especial interest of which children of tender years are often the subjects, should survive the period of their leaving school, and result in an affectionate watchfulness over them during the first perilous years of their intercourse with the world. No complaint is more commonly heard among our clergy than that those who have been educated in our schools are lost to the Church by scores, if not by hundreds, as soon as the school time is over. This complaint, I fear, is but too well grounded, but I think that it suggests some important topics of self-examination to ourselves. Are we sufficiently careful to follow with our eye the chidren of both sexes who have ceased

to come under daily observation by entering on the duties of their secular callings? This inquiry applies most forcibly to the young men of our flocks who for many reasons are less likely to come under the protection of watchful guides than young persons of the other sex, and who are at the same time exposed to a more dangerous class of temptations. The interest, however, which both sexes alike demand at our hands, consists not merely in using means to preserve them in the practice of their formal religious duties, but in keeping up their attachment to the Church to which they belong, by engaging them in some practical form of connection with it, such as association with confraternities, or participation in offices or works of which it is the centre and spring. I have myself witnessed in various ways, and in more than one place, the incalculable advantage of maintaining by some such definite and practical bond of union, the tie between young persons, but especially young men, and their church. I have found that the privileges of the sanctuary or the choir have been prized as the most precious of distinctions, and that the offices of the Church have proved successful rivals, not to say powerful antagonists, to the attractions of the theatre or the music hall. I have known young men who have been, to my un-

doubting belief, kept harmless amid the manifold temptations of this metropolis, through influences directly received in or by means of the Catholic Church; and however rare such instances may be, they are after all but extreme specimens of a power which she exercises in greater or less measure over numbers who have lived under the shelter of the London Oratory, and other ecclesiastical establishments that might be named. With the exception of our poor children, there is no class of Catholics who more powerfully appeal to our affectionate sympathies than that of young men removed from the immediate supervision of teachers and spiritual guides, and plunged into the midst of a world which tries by countless fascinations to beguile them into its meshes, and counteract the teachings of the Church which it hates with a sagacious instinct as the only enemy whose power is greater than its own. It is hardly necessary, after all that has been said, to insist upon the value of Evening Schools, Young Men's Societies, Lending Libraries, and other such institutions as powerfully aid the more direct work of the Church, by providing for this important class the means of friendly intercourse, and the opportunity of literary improvement in conjunction with those safeguards which we alone can furnish against

the dangers of indiscriminate association and unrestricted reading. With such an armoury of defensive weapons as are at our command, it will be an indelible reproach if any of the mischief which we have so much reason to deplore in this especial department of parochial responsibility, shall be justly attributable to our supineness and neglect.*

The argument of the foregoing lecture derives new force from the late legal recognitions of the principle of undenominational, or, as I prefer to call it, undogmatic education. It is a received axiom of the present day, that education of itself, and apart from all direct religious training, is a great moral teacher. This proposition would be in a measure true, if the sole end of man's being were to occupy with credit his place in society. There can be no doubt that whatever tends to increase self-respect, to furnish mental resources, and to promote habits of diligence, is so far a safeguard against temptations of a certain class. Yet mere education, as the word is commonly and defectively understood, while it may form a barrier against some temptations, opens the door to others

*In illustration of the above remarks, I may refer to the Catholic Orphanage at Greenwich, under the direction of its kind and able superior, the Reverend Dr. Todd, as an establishment in which the relations of a teachers with the youth committed to his care are maintained in the happiest manner and with the most successful results.

from which even society itself may suffer—to those, namely, which come of unrestrained access to the poisonous literature of the age. We Catholics, moreover, must never acquiesce in any view of the end of man's being which does not provide in the first place for his destination to immortality, or which so limits the object of education as to aim at any less momentous result than the sanctification of his moral nature. Of this result our popular systems are found to take no account whatever. Yet it needs not to be said how purely superficial is any kind of moral agency which does not direct its scope beyond the care of the external comportment. What, in fact, are the securities which the mere cultivation of the intellect provides against the fever of human passions and the allurements of the world? To encounter such forces with the abstract conclusions of philosophy, is like going out with the first weapon that comes to hand against a powerful and well disciplined army. It is from the great Apostle that we must learn the character of the armourer wherewith to encounter a power which, being itself supernatural, can be vanquished only by weapons of an ethereal temper.*

But by those who are not prepared to go the lengths of pure secularism, great stress is laid on the intro-

* Eph. vi. 12, *et. seq.*

duction of the Bible as a class-book. The probable effect of this procedure will be to inspire the pupils with a permanent dislike of the sacred book which they will have learned to associate with the drudgery of their school work. But there is another view of the subject which is worth consideration. It seems to be thought that the Bible is a vast magazine of unsectarian religion. Never, surely, was there a greater mistake. The Bible is the most dogmatic of books. What Ultramontane theologian has ever said anything stronger than those words of our Lord, "He that believeth not shall be damned?'* Our own translators have shrunk from the sound of this fearful word, and contented themselves with expressing its sense. But in the Protestant version it stands forth in its own unveiled awfulness. Why do not the reformers of the Athanasian Creed begin their work somewhat farther back? Yet this denunciation upon that intellectual perversity for which it is now commonly said that man is not responsible, forms but one of the numerous texts upon which the pupils of the new schools will stumble, and of which they will seek an interpretation from their teachers. If those teachers, acting in the spirit of the law, refuse to aid them, the more intelligent of them will

*St. Mark, xvi. 16, P. V.

soon begin to find out that the Church Catholic possesses the only true key to the meaning of the Bible. If, on the other hand, the teachers have recourse to the received interpretations of such passages, they will run the risk of incurring the contempt of their disciples by answers so entirely beside the mark. They will probably adopt the latter rather than the former side of the alternative. They will tell these poor children in effect to regard faith as a sentiment, heresy as an anachronsim, the Eucharist as a commemoration, celibacy as a chimera, the angels as poetry, the Devil as a principle, hell as a metaphor, and eternity as time. When the children find out that Catholics can give a more intelligible account of these things, they will perhaps have recourse to them for the satisfaction of their perplexities. But should they place more faith in their teachers than those teachers will probably claim as true Protestants, then, as they grow up, they will be pretty sure to add two more articles to the creed of their youth, by accounting miracles as myths and the Gospel itself as a legend. These prospects, my dear brethren, present a new stimulous to your watchful zeal, and I would say to each one of you individually, in the words of the great Apostle, 'Tu vero vigila, in omnibus labora, opus fac Evangelistæ,

ministerium tuum imple, sobrius esto. Erit enim tempus cum sanam doctrinam non sustinebunt, sed ad sua desideria coacervabunt sibi magistros, prurinetes auribus et a veritate quidem auditum avertent, ad fabulas autem convertentur.'*

*2 Tim. iv. 3, *et seq.*

# LECTURE VI.

## *THE CONFESSIONAL.*

Qui condolere possit iis qui ignorant et errant, quoniam et ipse circumdatus est infirmitate.—Heb. v. 2.

We have hitherto regarded the priest in his relations with masses of persons rather than with individuals. In preaching or catechising he is obliged to shape his instructions with a view to what is common, rather than to what is peculiar in the character and circumstances of his hearers; to the temptations, difficulties, or obligations which belong to them as a class, rather than to those manifold varieties which distinguish them from one another. Yet it requires but a very slight acquaintance with human nature to be aware how little, in dealing with a number of persons on one broad principle, or with a view to any common characteristics, we can provide for the special needs of the individual. It is the glory of the Catholic Church that she furnishes the means of supplying the necessary defects of all

general and indiscriminative teaching by an ordinance which brings the priest into direct communication with individual souls, and enables him to adapt his instructions to what is strictly personal in the case of each. This ordinance, as I need scarcely say, is the great institution of the Confessional upon which I am now about to make some remarks, not so much from its point of view as a Sacrament ordained for the pardon of sin, as in its character of an instrument for moral and spiritual guidance.

In order that the Confessional may answer its purpose as a supplement to other modes of instruction which do not admit of a direct personal communication between the teacher and the taught, it is necessary that the confessor should distinctly and practically regard it under this special aspect. It is quite possible to administer the Sacrament of Penance in a manner which, while it satisfies the essential requirements of the ordinance, still overlooks its especial use in the view of its character here sought to be presented. We may deal in the abstract with our penitents as well as with any other class of disciples; I mean that we may hear their confessions, give them a few words of good, but perfectly general instruction, absolve them, and send them away without violating any positive rule of

duty, but yet without availing ourselves of a most valuable opportunity of reaching their hearts. I am fully alive to the difficulty of doing this in all cases. Much will depend upon the nature of the confession itself; something upon the evidences of a desire to receive such special instruction on the part of the penitent. Again, there is a difference between habitual penitents, and those who come to us but once in a way, and who we may suppose have other directors, by whose advice to shape their conduct. It happens also at particular seasons, when the number of penitents is very large, that we are obliged, or think ourselves obliged, to confine ourselves within narrower limits of time and subject than are necessary where the number of penitents is fewer and time more at our command. I do not wish to enter into the limitations of my argument which these and such-like peculiarities of circumstance may impose. But, speaking generally, I think it cannot be insisted on too strongly that the confessor should have an eye to his penitents one by one, like the good shepherd, who does not deal with his sheep, so to say, by the head, but knows them severally, and is known of them as the personal guide of each. Of all members of his flock there are none in whom the spiritual pastor feels so deep an

interest as in his penitents. The admirable rule of the Church which leaves every Catholic at liberty to choose his own confessor, renders the mere act of confession a certain mark of confidence in the priest selected for that purpose, and seems to impose on him a corresponding duty of interest in one who bares before him the inmost secrets of the conscience, and thus unfolds the character of besetting temptations. As a general rule, the confessor will not offer particular advice, independently of the confession, unless it be expressly asked. But the confession itself, if it be anything more than one of those very pointless ones which present no especial subject of remark, will give the confessor a guide as to the nature and subject of the instruction to be founded on it; and, if the penitent be sincere in a desire of moral and spiritual improvement, such penitent will be encouraged by these proofs of a personal interest on the part of the confessor to communicate with him more freely as time proceeds upon spiritual topics of a personal interest. Thus will be established that peculiar tie between the confessor and his penitent, which answers to the relation between the sick man and his physician, and which is, as we know, one of the characteristic benefits which the Church attributes to the ordi-

nance as an instrument of medicinal help and relief.

The solemn nature of all instruction given under the seal of confession entails on the confessor a corresponding obligation of care and circumspection as to the character of the instruction itself. It comes to the receiver with a power and authority which do not belong to any other kind of teaching. What is said from the pulpit is not received by any single hearer as addressed especially to himself or herself. Important, then, as it is that the preacher should weigh his words, this duty is far more incumbent on the confessor, who is felt by each rightly-disposed penitent to speak with the authority of an oracle. It is perhaps a sense of the responsibility belonging to instruction in the Confessional which leads many young confessors to shrink from giving it at all, or inclines them to give it in so general a form as to convey little benefit to the hearer. Certainly, if the instruction be not sound and apposite, it is far better that it should be too general than to definite. But what we should aim at is to combine soundness and loving tenderness with a regard to the particular needs and circumstances of the penitent.

It is no part of my province to consider the

subject of confession and direction in its theological bearings. I take it for granted that the priest who receives faculties as an approved confessor, is well grounded in the main principles of moral and ascetical science, and that he possesses every requisite towards forming a practical judgment upon the various questions which may come before him, with the exception only of that experience which time alone can supply. All that I can properly attempt is, to offer you some suggestions as the fruit of that experience, an attention to which will, as I believe, greatly assist you in turning your abstract knowledge to account.

I will say of confession what I said of preaching, only with still greater earnestness : that we cannot form too high an estimate of the great responsibility attaching to those who are called to administer the Sacrament of which it forms part, and that the best human safeguard against the blightning effects of custom and routine is to think from time to time of the nature and gravity of the work. What situation, if we only reflect upon it, can be more awful than that of the priest when first brought into the relations of confessor and director with a sinner kneeling before him, and hanging on his lips for the words which are to convey to him the message of mercy and

to guide him in the way of peace? How hard to remember that he himself, though invested with the attributes of authority as a delegate and representative of his Lord in the judicial office, is a sinner like the penitent before him with the aggravation of light and privilege which that penitent, in all probability, has not to deplore in anything like the same degree! It is no doubt one of the merciful purposes of the dispensation which commits to sinners this high prerogative, that a provision is thus made for its exercise in the spirit of forbearance and tenderness.. No meditation is so profitable to the confessor as that which brings before him the sense of his own infirmity, because none is so apt to secure a generous and compassionate treatment of his penitents. This disposition on his part is at once so necessary and so hard to preserve under the manifold temptations by which it is apt to be assailed or threatened, that you will pardon me for detaining you a little while longer on the subject.

We can never estimate too highly the greatness and dignity of the Sacerdotal Office; and its relations with the Body Mystical are inferior in importance to those alone which subsist between it and the Real Body of our Lord. But the more highly we appreciate the dignity of the priesthood, the more

deeply must we be humbled by the thought of our own personal unworthiness. The truly humble priest has no occasion to impress the dignity of his office upon others by any studied or artificial methods; for those who will not recognise it in his simple and modest bearing will not be made to do so by any other means. Now, the sense of personal unworthiness it is which opens the heart and warms the sympathies of the confessor. Other considerations will tend in the same direction. He will call to mind the feelings with which, before he was a priest, he used himself to enter the Confessional and the sensitiveness of those feelings to the slightest indications of manner on the part of his confessor. He will remember how, by a gentle and attractive bearing, he was invited to make a sincere and open-hearted manifestation of conscience; and he may well conceive in imagination, though possibly he may never have known by experience, what would have been the crushing effect of anything like harshness, querulousness, or impatience. It is our disadvantage as priests, that we are seldom if ever reminded in our own case of the effect of a repulsive manner in the Confessional. Our office generally secures us an honourable reception, and perhaps even too indulgent a treatment. Hence, it is the more

necessary for us to place ourselves, by an effort of the imagination, in a position with which we are not personally familiar—I mean, the position of a penitent coming for the first time into the presence of a confessor previously unknown, and almost overwhelmed with the prospect of a confession which fears and scruples invest with a terror not belonging to it. Who does not know the consolatory and reassuring effect of a gentle word addressed to us under such circumstances; and who that does know this by experience will ever fail, except through human infirmity to extend this solace to one who comes to him in the spirit of confidence for relief in sorrow and counsel under difficulties? Nor is it merely relief and consolation which tenderness of disposition and calmness of manner on the part of the confessor will be sure to convey to the mind of the penitent. A still more important result of this fatherly demeanour is found in its tendency to promote the sincerity and integrity of the confession itself. When the penitent finds that the contrite revelation of sin, so far from startling or estranging the confessor, has no effect but that of eliciting fresh tokens of compassion, and drawing forth new words of encouragement, a load of mistrust is removed from his mind, and he is encouraged in a spirit of

confidence which is the best security, not merely for the completeness of the confession, but for that unreserved openness which supplies the confessor with fulcrum for salutary direction. Sometimes, penitents will show by their manner, beyond the possibility of mistake, that they are quite overwhelmed by the burthen on their conscience. They can scarcely do more than say or signify that they have some terrible secret to reveal. In such cases you will use every argument, and employ every lawful expedient, for putting them at their ease. You will remind them of the boundless compassion and indefatigable long-suffering of our Redeemer. You will assure them that they can tell you nothing which your experience of the frailty of our nature and the wiles of the Tempter has not prepared you to hear. You may suggest some possible explanation of their distress, which will throw its true cause into favourable and consolatory relief. It is an inexpressible boone to a terrified pēnitent to find that he is supposed by his confessor worse than he is. I have heard of a celebrated confessor at Rome who used to allay the fears of an alarmed penitent by this kind of holy artifice. When one entered his confessional, saying that he had some unpardonable sin on his conscience, the kind old man would reply

playfully, 'What is it, my child? Have you killed your father and mother?'—'No, Father, not quite so bad as that.'—'Very good,' the confessor would rejoin; 'take courage then, my child, and tell me all.'

I am not denying that there are occasions on which the confessor must exchange this tone for one of sternness and even severity. It is unnecessary to specify the cases which demand this severer treatment. Suffice it to say that the confessor who duly regards the obligations of his office, and is animated by an abiding zeal for the salvation of souls, will speedily acquire the instinct of a wise discrimination between the circumstances which call for the gentler, and those which demand the severer handling. The great matter is that, in our dealings with penitents, we should always act on principle, and never according to human caprice. The temptation under which we lie, and which the wear and tear of active missionary life has no small tendency to increase, is that of treating our penitents differently according to the feelings of the moment, or to those varieties of character or demeanour in them which have a natural tendency to attract or repel. We must therefore strive, above all things, to preserve in the Confessional that equanimity which its various casualties are so apt to disturb. We must

be on our guard against the most distant approaches of the spirit of favouritism, whether it be suggested by the accidents of age, sex, social position, or the like. We have nothing to do with our penitents in any other character than that of sinners who seek pardon and assistance at our hands; and the more we can merge mere accidental distinctions in this common estimate of their claims upon us, the better we shall discharge our duty in the sight of Almighty God, and the more likely will they be to profit sensibly by the exercise of our ministry. I am here speaking, as I need hardly say, of such personal peculiarities as have no necessary bearing upon the due administration of the ordinance. I do not, of course, mean that we either can or ought to overlook such distinctions as aid us in discharging the office with a view to the spiritual benefit of those for whom it is intended; as for example, the difference between occasional and habitual penitents. I think, however, that the distinction I intend to draw between circumstances which ought and which ought not to affect or modify our treatment of penitents, will be sufficiently plain, especially if you will bring your recollection of what I said in the earlier part of this Lecture to qualify my present remarks. Then I was speaking

of the Confessional as an instrument of edification. Here I am speaking of temptations which it offers to querulousness, impatience and favouritism. We must often hear confessions which are trying to patience; those of children, or ill-instructed Catholics, who must be helped through their difficulties; those of aged or infirm persons; or, again, of scrupulous persons; or those who come with merely stereotyped confessions, and are evidently playing false with their consciences, or neglecting to probe them. All such cases make urgent demands on our prudence and self-control.

Here it will not be out of place to say a word upon the importance of avoiding in this, and all our ministrations, the spirit of hurry. I think I have been told that the Sons of St. Ignatius never shorten the hearing of one confession, in order to make way for another, but consider it a less evil that the unconfessed should have to wait indefinitely and perhaps even lose the chance of being heard at all, than that a present penitent should be hurried or go away without the requisite amount of instruction. Be this as it may, it is, at any rate, very undesirable to get into the habit of what may be called knocking off a great number of confessions without regard to the manner in which each of them is carried out.

Indeed, the very perfection of the sacerdotal temper is never to be in a hurry, whether in the Confessional, in the sick room, or on other less important occasions of pastoral intercourse. Some people are always in a hurry, even when they have little work on their hands, while others who are fully employed seem always to have a time for everything and an ear for everyone.

With one suggestion of a minor yet very important nature, I will bring this part of my subject to a close. Let me recommend you to be punctual to your appointed time for entering the Confessional, and not afterwards to leave it, without necessity, before the period of its close, so as to run the risk of penitents going away unheard. It costs many persons a good deal to come to confession at all; and duties which are unpleasant in themselves are those for which we really take dispensation. 'I went to confession,' says the boy to his father, or a servant to her master, 'but the Rev. Mr. A. was not in his box.' A very bad excuse indeed for neglect, yet one for which I am sure that none of you would like to give occasion if you could possibly help it. But the case I have just supposed is far from being the most serious which may happen. The boy will be told by his father, or the servant by her master, to go again

to confession next Saturday. But the same accident may possibly occur to some careless member of your flock who has no one near him to give him such good advice, and in that case he may have lost his last and only remaining opportunity of making his peace with God.

You will easily perceive, my dear brethren, how many of the duties on which I have thus briefly touched are connected with the habitual tenour of your lives as priests. That gentleness of spirit which comes of deep-seated humility, that equability of temper and manner which conduces alike to our own peace of mind and to the effect of our ministrations on others, and that regularity and exactitude which arise from a love of our work, are all of them the fruit of constant meditation, careful self-discipline, and the cultivation by all means at our command of the ecclesiastical spirit. Far more effectual as a means of telling on the religious condition of others than ability, or learning, or eloquence, or tact, is the interior spirit of the priest. This it is which makes itself felt by those around him with a power of which he is unconscious, and which they can hardly explain; and as the Confessional furnishes the most effectual means of working upon the souls of others, we find, as we

might expect, that in no other department of sacerdotal duty does the success of the priest's ministrations depend more upon his personal sanctification, than in all that relates to this marvellous institution of the mercy and loving providence of our Redeemer.

# LECTURE VII.

## *OCCASIONAL ADVICE.*

Verbum dulce multiplicat amicos, et mitigat inimicos.
Ecclus. vi. 5.

Besides the more solemn and authoritative direction which belongs to the Confessional, the priest will often be called upon to give advice to his parishioners, and even to those outside his flock, upon the various questions which move thoughtful persons to seek the counsel of one whose office and character they reverence, and whose opinion comes to them with all the weight of mature wisdom and ample experience. By some he will be consulted as a teacher and guide whose judgment they will feel themselves bound to follow with far more of deference and implicit trust than that of an ordinary friend; while it will be in the latter character, rather than in that of one involving more authority in the counsellor and demanding more submission in the inquirer, that his advice will be sought by those who do not stand towards him in any present spiritual

relation. This department of our sacred office is one which suggests especial motives to the exercise of prudence. It lays us all under a temptation to overstep the due limits of our authority, and to expect, on the part of those who consult us, a greater amount of deference than the nature of the relation would seem to justify. We must always bear in mind that spiritual direction is one thing, and occasional advice another; and that we are not warranted, either in administering the latter with the decision of tone which befits the former, nor in expecting to receive on the part of the inquirer the same kind or degree of submission. If we do not keep this distinction steadily in view, we shall be in danger of what is called domineering, which is the abuse of spiritual authority, often by those outside the Church confounded with the just assertion of sacerdotal power, but not the less a real danger in the habit of its exercise, because it is so commonly imputed to us by malevolent or ignorant critics. The true protection against this danger, as well as against all others of the same kind, will be found, under the Divine guidance, in those acts of personal humility on which I have more than once ventured to insist.

It is, of course, quite impossible to enumerate even

the classes of subjects on which a priest is liable to be consulted out of the Confessional, by one or other of those who value his opinion, or presume on his kindness. They are, in fact, as multiform as the sorrows, perplexities, and trials which are incident to our chequered state of existence. All that I can attempt to do is to specify one or two of those which are either of the most frequent occurrence, or which, more than others, seem to call for the sympathy of the priest, and to require the exercise of a sound discretion. I will begin with the demands made upon his compassion and power of giving consolation, by the various forms of personal affliction. I have just implied that in such cases he will have two things to do, intimately connected indeed with one another, yet actually distinct. The one is, to compassionate sorrow; and the other, to minister to its relief. With regard to that special class of troubles which arise from bodily pain and disease, I shall have a better opportunity of speaking when I come to the visitation and consolation of the sick and dying. Here I will confine myself to those cases of mental affliction, whether arising from bereavement, poverty, the cruelty or ingratitude of relatives or friends, or other such domestic troubles as bring those who

labour under them into the presence of the priest, whether in his own room of audience, or otherwise.

Here I am going to say something which may sound harsh, though I mean it in just the opposite spirit. I think that we priests have certain special temptations to be cold-hearted. These temptations, if I mistake not, arise from three causes. The first of them is found in the nature of our education. We are, as a general rule, withdrawn at a very early age from the sphere of domestic interests and affections. When at college, we are precluded, by a wise rule of discipline, from the cultivation of ill-regulated friendships. Our life on the mission is the sequel of this wholesome discipline ; and, if not by rule, at all events on principle, has a tendency to withdraw us to a great extent from the charities of domestic life. This is our second temptation : to cloak a kind of selfishness in the disguise of a rigorous asceticism. The third and still more powerful temptation to unsympathising habits results from our familiarity with the various forms and degrees of human suffering. All these incidents of our vocation, if rightly considered, are of inestimable value, but this fact does not secure them against the danger of abuse. Their value consists mainly in this, that they preserve us against that mawkish sentimentality which

is sometimes mistaken for Christian sympathy, and that they enable us to deal with the emergencies of distress in a calm and self-possessed spirit, where those who are less accustomed to sights of human misery, or who take a less true estimate of it, are apt to be overcome by their feelings, and thus incapacitated for useful action. On the other hand, the natural effect of seeing so much human misery as the priest is compelled to see, is to make us think less of each case in detail and to forget that the sufferings with which we are called to sympathise have each their own special aggravation, however our estimate of them may be blunted by the habit of regarding them in the general. I do not think that any corrective of this tendency is so efficacious as meditations on the life and actions of Our Blessed Lord, in whose character this quality of tender compassion for the sufferings of others was so conspicuous. Instances of it are to be found in almost every page of the Gospel history, and the argument which they suggest to us is of this kind: that, if our Divine Master, who came from heaven to die for the sins of the world, could yet be moved to tears at the grave of Lazarus, or work a miracle to relieve the hunger of those whose wants He anticipated before they were expressed, we, His servants, must

never allow ourselves to underrate the claims of temporal suffering or necessity, because of the incomparably higher importance of those spiritual ailments or needs which address themselves in the first instance to our sympathy. Next to the character of our Lord, there is no one which may be studied with greater advantage from the point of view before us than that of St. Paul, and I recommend to your earnest attention two sermons preached by Dr. Newman before the English College at Rome, in which the sacerdotal tenderness and compassion of that great Apostle are illustrated from his life and writings.*

It is not every one who feels for human misery that is successful in giving comfort to those who are suffering under it; but it is quite certain that the indispensable condition of giving such comfort is first to put ourselves in the place of those who require it, and to look at the facts of the case as far as possible with their feelings. The power of imparting consolation to those who are in trouble is a gift rather than an acquirement, although something admits of being said in the way of rule on the subject. There are few persons who have not been in trouble at one or other period of their lives, and

* 'Occasional Sermons,' Sermons vii. and viii.

even priests are no exception to the general law. Such persons know by experience what topics were most serviceable in bringing comfort to their own minds, and this experience will furnish some kind of guide to them in dealing with others. St. Paul himself found that the grounds of consolation which most prevailed with others were those whose power he himself knew by experience.* The great secret of true consolation is to suggest something especially appropriate to the circumstances of the sufferer, rather than to deal in those general reflections which are common to all such cases. With a view to such consolation, it is necessary that the person administering it should place himself, by an effort of imagination, in the situation of the sufferer; and this I think is what we ought always to do if we desire to give effective aid in distress. But if, from any cause, we are unable to do this, and are consequently thrown back upon considerations of a more general nature, then I think that there is one rule upon which we shall always do well to act, and that rule is to suggest such reflections as are of an especially religious character. The particular form of such reflections may well be left to the judgment and discretion of the priest who is called upon to

* See 2 Cor. i. 4.

discharge this duty of his consolatory office. But I would venture to recommend the following among other considerations as especially useful. You can never err in suggesting to one who is in trouble that, of all means which Almighty God uses towards drawing us near to Himself, suffering is beyond question the most powerful. You will advise, as a motive to this thought, the frequent contemplation of the Crucifix, or a meditation on the Dolours of our Blessed Lady. Should there be anything of peculiar bitterness in the case of the sufferer, you will recommend a loving submission to the adorable will of God as the solution of all apparent difficulties. A brief meditation on the Agony in the Garden, in which that submission is set forth in the instance of Him who is our Example, will always be the best mode of bringing the troubled spirit into this disposition. Of all books that ever were written with the view of calming the mind which has for the moment lost its balance, I know of none to be compared with the 'Imitation of Christ.' There is a repose, a truthfulness, an insight into the needs of every sufferer in that wonderful book which places it almost on a level with the inspired Scriptures themselves. I could almost say of it, that, if it stood alone among the devotional fruits

of our religion, it would be sufficient to prove that the one and only true representation of the Gospel is to be found in the Catholic Church; so conspicuously does it shine forth in comparison even with the best of similar works which have originated outside her Communion. The tendency of all suffering to wean us from the world, and to give to human things their just complexion, is another topic which has the double advantage of suggesting consolation and permanently elevating and sanctifying the mind of the sufferer. But the contemplation of the Crucifix is, after all, the best and truest remedy for human sorrow. In it every form of distress finds its expression, and, together with its expression, its relief. Is it bodily pain? Here it is realised in its greatest intensity. Is it bereavement, or the desertion of friends? All the Apostles save one have forsaken Him and fled. Is it the sting of calumny? In the Crucifixion, the malignity of enemies had at once its triumph and its cure. Is it the sight of sorrow which we cannot alleviate? Our Lady is at the foot of the cross. Is it that most terrible of all the powers of our Enemy, the sense of desolation and desertion by God? The words 'Eloi, Eloi,' are on the lips of our dying Redeemer. Is it, lastly, the weariness of spirit that comes with sorrow, and

makes us feel as though it had no end? The Fifth Word from the Cross is soon to be followed by a Sixth, 'It is consummated;' and by a Seventh, 'Into Thy hands I commend my spirit.'

Besides those subjects of distress which rightly bring sufferers to their appointed spiritual guide for consolation and advice, there are likewise others of a less serious nature with which the priest will occasionally be called upon to deal, and which deserve at his hands a somewhat more summary treatment. A quarrelsome husband, a troublesome neighbor, an importunate landlord, an impending lawsuit, with a host of similar domestic grievances, are often supposed to be fit subjects of reference to the parish priest, and are accordingly submitted to his decision, without sufficient regard to the many more important demands upon his time and attention which the nature of his office creates. I do not say that he should refuse to listen to such domestic histories, which are often very real occasions of trouble and embarrassment. But there are one or two obvious considerations which should make him cautious about opening his ear to them without reserve, or offering the first advice which suggests itself to his mind. In the first place, as most of such cases involve contending claims, it is hazardous

to volunteer a decided opinion upon an *ex parte* statement. It is not desirable that the applicant for counsel should go off with the intelligence that the parish priest is decidedly on his or her side, especially as so important a fact is not likely to lose by the telling. If, therefore, the case be one in which the priest thinks that he can interpose with advantage, he will feel it right to go into it fully, and confront the opposing parties. If it be not such a case, I suppose that he will do well in advising the applicant to go home and settle the question for the best. Another reason which should make us cautious about giving indiscriminate heed to such representations is this: that, as a general rule, it is very desirable that priests should not mix themselves up with family matters. I do not mean that they should yield blindly to the absurd prejudice which haunts the Protestant mind in this matter, but that there is no need to encounter that prejudice without sufficient reason; while, apart from it altogether, priests, like other persons, do well to follow the Apostolic rule, and not concern themselves unnecessarily with the affairs of their neighbours. This last objection, however, is to a certain extent affected by the social condition of the persons in whose favour the interference of the priest is

claimed. It holds good in the case of those who, to use the common phrase, are well-to-do in the world, far more than in that of the poor. The Catholic poor, and especially those with whom we have to deal, have happily no such prejudice on the subject; but, in that spirit of loyalty towards the priests of God which is on the whole characteristic of them, regard their clergy as the oracles by whose voice all practical questions are best determined. It is so important not to discourage this sentiment unnecessarily, that the priest will often make allowance for encroachments on his time and patience, rather than do anything which may have a tendency to thwart it.

A subject far more delicate than any of those to which I have just referred, on which the priest is liable to be consulted, is that of the disposal of money, whether during life or after death. If he conscientiously feel it his duty—and undoubtedly it often is his duty—to give advice on this question, he will have to steer his course between the influences of two opposite temptations. The first impulse which the needs of his Church or its institutions may possibly suggest is that which finds its expression in the words 'Give your money to me, and I will use it to the best advantage.' But he is bound in con-

science to consider how far he can properly give such advice with a due regard to the obligations of justice, or to the claims of other objects possibly more pressing than those which naturally seem paramount in his eyes. It need hardly be said, moreover, how easily such advice, especially when offered on a death-bed, may result in interminable disputes, far more injurious to the interests of the Church than any gift or bequest can possibly conduce to them.

Here let me urge upon you never, if you can avoid it, to have anything to do with making a will, unless indeed it be your own. Let those who ask you to do them this favor be always referred to their lawyer. The chances are that if you usurp his functions, the will may turn out to be invalid, or at any rate a subject of litigation. If a lawyer be not within call, and the case be urgent, better anyone than yourself as the manufacturer of the ticklish document. But what if there be no one at hand except yourself who understands the form of making a will, and your dying penitent earnestly desires to leave some portion of his property for a religious or charitable purpose? This is a case which I think that the most jealous opponents of priestly influence would admit to form a legitimate exception to the

rule. At any rate it is one of sufficient complication to constitute a fit subject of discussion at an Ecclesiastical Conference. If you must needs give advice to one who sincerely desires to distribute the property which God has given him in the best manner possible, never omit to press upon him the imperative demands of justice, and the legitimate rights of kindred. Yet do not scruple at the same time to represent also the due claims of religion and of the poor. It is quite possible for us to know ourselves and to sift our own motives, and very important that, where we are able to clear them of all infection of selfishness or avarice, we should allow no considerations of human respect to deter us from the course which, however it may be misunderstood by the world, will secure us the approval of God and of our own consciences. In short, we live in the midst of temptations to priestly pusillanimity, as well as to priestly avarice; and, although the latter are more dangerous than the former, yet so long as the former have a real existence, it is right to give them a place in our regards. After all, it is not every priest, however he may be able to clear his own conscience of interested motives, who can also brave the prejudice which is apt to impute such motives to our unpopular order: nor can it be denied that this

prejudice deserves a certain, though no more than a certain, deference at our hands. The best way of dispelling it is to ignore and outlive it. Even a Catholic priest, in this our England, who remains long enough at his post, loves his work, keeps peace with his neighbours, and pays his bills (the last condition of influence being by no means the least important), may reckon on outgrowing the bitterest hostility. He may thus disarm even Murphy himself, far more effectually than by denunciations from the pulpit, or by allowing his ardent parishioners to hoot or pelt the aggressor or his followers. The English dislike Catholicity much, but they love the appearances of calm and steady conscientiousness more, and this is saying a great deal for them. Another specific in the same line is found in the manifestation of a liberal spirit towards such Protestant objects and institutions as a Catholic can promote without compromise; such as hospitals and dispensaries. In the same way, we ought to be forward in co-operating with all national movements which involve no surrender of our own characteristic principles. Do not, however, suppose for a moment that I wish to represent the influence which results from such a line of action as a motive which should have any part in leading you to follow it. We

ought, as I conceive, so to act because it is our plain duty. All I mean is, that such a course of action, as one of its temporal blessings, has a tendency to smooth our path and strengthen our hands. Once for all ; let me advise you never to make the mere acquisitions of influence an object of your pursuit. If you do your duty without looking to the right hand or to the left, influence, in the only sense in which it is worth having, will come of itself, and, by a paradoxical law of our being, in a proportion inverse to that in which it is sought.

While I am on the subject of that just and legitimate priestly influence which gives effect to our advice by securing to us a character for prudence and conscientiousness, I cannot help hanging a few words on a peg supplied me by the remark I just now made about the importance of paying our bills with all possible regularity. This duty is part of one which is far more extensive than itself ; I mean that of not encumbering our missions with debt. It is the less necessary for me to give this duty that place in our consideration which its importance demands, because we have a certain security against the disregard of it in the vigilance of our ecclesiastical authorities. Still it is certain that even this safeguard has not always been sufficient to preserve

missions from grave embarrassments, priests from crushing anxieties, and tradesmen from serious injury. It is precisely the most zealous and hard-working of our clergy who are in the greatest danger of falling into this generous, but short-sighted, imprudence; and these are especially they whom our bishops are most unwilling to check and discourage. Yet, the more tenderly our superiors deal with us, the more reluctant should we be to abuse their confidence and involve them in difficulties, which a severer course might have enabled them to obviate. We must always bear in mind—we, at least, who have the principal charge of churches—that the scanty funds accruing to us from the few and precarious resources which the spoliation of our ancient revenues has left us, do not belong to us as property, but as a trust. The recollection of this fact, while it will guard us against any undue application of those funds, will equally deter us from exceeding them. It is our plain duty to lighten, as far as possible, the labours and anxieties of our bishops, and to employ the large discretion they give us in checking the growth of evils which it is easier for us to remedy in their beginnings than for our superiors to cure when they have reached their height.

## LECTURE VIII.

### *RECEPTION AND TREATMENT OF CONVERTS.*

Dicit ad eum Nicodemus: Quomodo potest homo nasci, cum sit senex?—S. Joan. iii. 4.

The great accession of converts to the Catholic Church during the last quarter of a century has not only added to the labors of the missionary or parochial priest, but has gone to form quite a new department of priestly duty. Previously to the time at which our converts first began to flow into the Church, with something like the force of a tide, the work of English priests was almost entirely confined to the spiritual care of hereditary Catholics, baptized into the faith of their parents in infancy. A convert to the Church was then a rare phenomenon, and the exception to a rule which has now no place but in history. The number of conversions which have taken place during the last twenty-five years is far greater than those outside the Church are aware. It is naturally, though most falsely, estimated by the names of the more

distinguished members of the class which find their way into the newspapers, and the ostentatious publication of which certainly tends to create the idea that Catholics appreciate the souls of converts according to the number of quarterings on their escutcheons, or of acres in their estates. The fact, however, is, that these names, besides bringing down upon us a good deal of not unmerited criticism, give no idea whatever of the work of conversion really going on. The magnitude and extent of that work are known to those only who are acquainted with the conversion statistics of our principal churches, by which it appears that the number of converts annually gained to the Church is to be estimated, not, as many persons suppose, by tens, but by hundreds. The social station of these converts sufficiently proves that the Catholic religion is finding its way to the minds and hearts of persons in every rank of life—clerks in counting-houses, apprentices in shops, tradesmen, men-servants and maid-servants, labourers, and so on through ascending grades of society, till we come to members of the liberal professions, lawyers, physicians, clergymen in great numbers, and members of the landed, commercial, or titled aristocracy.

And now I entreat of you not to think that I am here indulging in a boast, where I am but

placing on record a simple fact. There is much to temper, and something to damp, the joy with which, as sincere Catholics, we must regard the accession of numbers to the fold of the Church. I cannot but fear that, while we are gaining from without, we may be losing from within: not, I would fain hope, in anything like an equal proportion, yet still sufficiently to mingle humiliation with our gratitude. I am not, as my friends know, disposed to take so discouraging a view as some others, of the mischief done to our poor children, whether through the agencies of an unscrupulous proselytism, the neglect of their natural guardians, the influences of a withering secularism, or other similar causes of spiritual and moral deterioration. Yet, I cannot but apprehend that our actual resources are quite inadequate to the demands upon our zeal and vigilance, which are created by these accumulated dangers, and more especially by that which threatens us from the presence at our doors of a vast machinery for the promotion of irreligious or pseudo-religious education. I trust, and indeed most firmly believe, that our clergy will always regard the spiritual care of our own people, and especially of our children, as an object incomparably more important than that of the acquisition of converts,

where the one clashes with the other. There is no more prevalent mistake, among the many from which we suffer, than that of supposing that the quest of converts forms any definite department of our work. The converts themselves dispense us from all active duty in this especial province. It is they who come after us, not we who go after them. It is they who have to gain from the Church, and not the Church which has to gain from them. The Truth which she guards and dispenses is alone of her essence; the mere number of those who are drawn to her is but an accident of her power. No convert has ever laid wealth, or rank, or learning at her feet, who could not say to her, in the words of the Psalmist, 'Bonorum meorum non eges.' *

Yet, since converts we have, and shall continue to have, the mode of receiving and dealing with them is a subject which must enter into our present inquiries. The enumeration above given of the various and distinct classes to which they belong may serve to confirm the remark that these accessions to our ranks not merely supply the priest with opportunities for additional work, but present so many points of distinction from other portions of his missionary duty as almost to form a special

* Ps. xv. 2.

department of their own. Those who come to him with their religious difficulties and inquiries, demand at his hands a mode of treatment varying in the separate instances almost as much as that which the physician is called upon to accommodate to the dif ferent cases of illness or ailment which are submitted to his examination and call for his advice. I have accordingly thought this subject sufficiently different from others of its class to form the matter of a lecture by itself; and, in offering to your consideration the results of my experience in the practical portion of it, I desire to speak, as at all other times, in deference to the judgment, not only of ecclesiastical superiors, but of those also with whose experience in the same department my own, although far from inconsiderable, cannot be justly compared.

Our relations with converts admit, as I think, of being reduced to three divisions, determined by the several stages in their progress during which they are brought under our care and direction. The first of these periods is that which gives opportunity for no other kind of aid than such as consists in the solution of intellectual difficulties, or the removal of conscientious scruples. Many persons of both sexes, but especially females, resort to the priest with questions on points of doctrine which never pass

from the region of inquiry into that of conviction, and still less of action. They come and depart like shadows ; sometimes returning after many days, and sometimes not at all. Either there was in them some defect of sincerity, and, like many persons, they asked advice which they did not mean to follow, or, although really sincere and in good faith in the earliest stage of their attraction to the Church, they have allowed the birds of the air, in the form of some worldly temptation or other, to devour the good seed which has been sown in their hearts. Still, it is certain that these truants form the exception, and not the rule, of the religious inquirers who come to us with their difficulties. It generally happens that those who go so far as to consult a priest at all, are sufficiently in earnest to follow up that first arduous and critical step by others yet more practical. At any rate, we are to suppose that all who come to inquire of us on the subject of religion have a serious intention of acting on our judgment, unless, as is sometimes the case, they give some unequivocal proof to the contrary. The time and manner of such inquiries are as various as the characters and positions of those who make them. Sometimes they will follow, when you least expect them, upon a sermon or some devotional office in your church,

and seem, perhaps truly, to have come of a sudden inspiration. In such cases, the movement towards the Church discloses itself in some such abrupt and simple form as this, 'Please, sir, I want to be a Catholic.' You will often find that the wish thus plainly but forcibly expressed is founded on reasons than which even a philosopher might have no better to give. You say 'Why do you want to be a Catholic?' and are answered, 'Because it is the true religion.' That answer indicates the suggestion of the Holy Spirit, offered to an unsophisticated heart through the medium of some unthought-of word in a sermon, or through the power of the Blessed Sacrament just before lifted up in Benediction, in the presence of a kneeling and breathless multitude. This is a class of inquirers who present little or no difficulty to the priest. In them, conviction has outrun the need of argument, and been arrived at without the tediousness of an intellectual process. They have believed, and therefore they have spoken. They have found in the Catholic Church, even before entering it, that which satisfies their religious instincts; whereas elsewhere they had asked for bread and received a stone, for a fish and received a serpent. Far different from theirs is the case of the inquirer, who comes to the priest with a long string

of intellectual difficulties or nervous apprehensions. He is satisfied that the true religion is nowhere out of the Catholic Church: but he is not yet satisfied that it is there. This is a very common case—the case I mean of those who are repelled from spurious forms of Christianity, without seeing their way to embrace that which alone is true and genuine. It is a case which, though not the most difficult for the priest, is the most perilous to the inquirer, for it offers to him the alternative between a faith, to the acceptance of which he cannot yet make up his mind, and an abyss of hopeless scepticism. This alternative, however, is one which the priest will not fail to point out with startling emphasis, and it is indeed one which may always be insisted on with equal truth and advantage. The principle of authority is clearly defined nowhere but in the Catholic Church; and the mind which is set loose from the hold of this principle is like a vessel which has drifted from its moorings, and has neither chart nor compass to guide it into port. Others again there are on whom the religious system in which they have been educated still retains a certain purchase, although they see much in the Catholic Church which attracts them into her fold. I do not know whether priests who are themselves converts, or those who have

always been Catholics, are the best fitted to deal with this particular class of inquirers. It would seem at first sight that the particular difficulties of converts are most likely to be clearly understood, and therefore successfully treated, by those priests who have known the same difficulties and surmounted them; and this, perhaps, is on the whole true. On the other hand, those whose privilege it has been never to have seared the experience of heretics, have a certain rough and ready method of dealing with these often merely sentimental objections, which may be less palatable to the inquirer, but is often more salutary to him than the more cautious and delicate course. It is nevertheless of great importance that in arguing for our own religion, we should give our disciples from without all due credit for the amount of truth involved in their present profession; and this is especially right in the case of those who come to us from the ranks of the Established Church, and more particularly from those of what is called the High Church party, who often bring with them so much knowledge of Catholic doctrine as leaves us little to do except in the way of supplying the foundation. It is of course impossible to specify the various forms of heretical objection with which we may be called upon to cope. Yet there are some

which are so frequent as to make it necessary that we should be habitually armed against them. The commonest of all are undoubtedly those which relate to the Catholic doctrine of our Blessed Lady, and to the prerogatives of the See of St. Peter. Here I will make an observation which I think you will do well to bear in mind. To combat the objections in detail which Protestants of one school or another bring against our doctrines, is an endless and hopeless task. But there is one topic which not only brings the controversy within manageable limits, but places it on its only true basis. This topic is that of the authority of the Church, and her correspondence, alone among all Christian communities, with the notes of truth deducible from reasons as well as scripture, and defined by those ancient creeds which Anglicons themselves accept. A teaching Church which is not One, and which is not Catholic, is a contradiction in terms; and no religious body, except that in communion with the See of St. Peter, can prefer the slightest claim to these essential marks of authority. The two remaining notes of the Church, so fully understood and so deeply appreciated by Catholics, are perhaps less capable of proof to those who are without than her Unity and Universality. It is especially hard to impress on Protes-

tants the Catholic idea of Sanctity; and those who do not clearly apprehend that idea will be apt to bring objections against the argument founded on this note, which we shall have no prospect of meeting with success so long as we and our opponents are not agreed on the precise character of the question at issue. There are two aspects under which the argument from authority may be advantageously presented to the Protestant mind—that of the *a priori* necessity of authoritative teaching, and that of the safeguards by which such teaching is secured under the Roman obedience, and nowhere else. This method of argument supersedes the need of proving our separate doctrines in detail; and has moreover the advantage of removing those doctrines from the region of mere opinion into that of divine faith.

The next stage in the progress of the convert is that where inquiry ends and action begins. We will suppose him to have laid his difficulties before you, and to have left you with the promise of considering your replies. You will have told him to seek constant help from above through the use of daily prayer, the actual words of which will signify far less than the intention with which they are offered. You will probably have advised him to use some form of petition with which his conscience can go

heartily along; such for instance, as the 'Veni Creator,' the 'Our Father,' or some of the collects for light and guidance which the Anglican Church has borrowed from the Catholic. You will have told him to lay his heart open before God with the utmost sincerity and confidence, and to divest himself of every possible worldly motive which can stand in the way of his ready correspondence with the Divine Will, whensoever made clearly known to him; and you will assure him, as you well may, that a prayer offered in this spirit never fails of a saving response. He promises to follow your advice, and a few days afterwards returns and tells you that he has made up his mind to place himself under your direction. At this point you will enter into new relations, with one who has changed the character of an inquirer for that of a disciple, and your duties in respect of him will be accordingly modified. It will be of the utmost importance for you to ascertain distinctly the grounds on which he seeks to enter the Church. Does he come to it merely because he regards it as an ampler sphere of privilege than the communion he intends to quit, while yet he looks upon that communion as in some sense the true Church, or a part of it, although labouring under serious disadvantages? Should his

desire of changing his religion be based on no better reason than this, you will do well to defer receiving him until he come to understand that the act of entering the Holy Catholic and Roman Church, if he expect it to be crowned with the benediction of God, must be an act of absolute surrender and submission, and not one of mere choice between two eligible alternatives. I cannot think that change of times and circumstances has put any qualifying interpretation upon the words of our Blessed Lord, which tell us that we must enter His Kingdom in the spirit of little children. I well know that there are excellent priests who think it so important to effect a conversion on any terms, that they are not disposed to stipulate too rigidly for its being made on the most perfect motive. They hold, I believe, that, once in the Church, and everything will come right. I have no wish to controvert this opinion, but I will add that my own experience is strongly in favour of the course I prefer. On the one hand, I have known lamentable instances of converts who were not required at the time of their reception to repudiate and abjure the heresy and schism in which they had previously lived, and who, having entered the Church on the principle of mere preference, have subsequently, on finding her not

exactly what they had imagined, exercised that preference in the opposite direction, and quitted a communion which they had never regarded as the sole ordained channel of salvation. Even, however, where they stop short of this fatal decision, converts who have been allowed to enter the Church with reserves will generally be found to encourage as Catholics that miserable habit of captious criticism which eats into the very vitals of faith. On the other hand, I do not happen to have met with a single case of apostacy among converts who have entered the Church in the spirit of absolute submission, and as considering it to be nothing less than a matter of life or death whether they did so or not. In my own experience I have never found reason to regret having made this an absolute condition of reception; while in more than one instance I have had occasion to rejoice that I did not yield to the temptation of purchasing a coversion at a lower price.

The next piece of advice I will venture to offer is, that you never receive a convert till he or she give you undeniable proof of instruction in the elements of the Catholic Faith. If you neglect this rule you will be in danger of gathering around you a set of hot-house converts, who will flourish very well in

the drawing-room but will never stand the vicissitudes of the open air. As one cause of apostacy is an insufficient appreciation of the claims of the Catholic Church, another will be found to have its origin in an insufficient acquaintance with Catholic doctrine. There are exceptions to every general rule, but my own experience goes to prove that catechetical instruction is quite as necessary in the case of what are called educated converts as in that of the humbler classes. No convert possessed of the right spirit, whatever be his or her rank or antecedents, will ever object to receive such instruction, and those who do will plainly show that they have something yet to learn in the moral as well as in the intellectual qualifications of a good Catholic. I can by no means except even the Anglican clergy from the operation of the general rule I have laid down. I speak of them of course as a body ; and, with this limitation, I will say that I have often been really surprised to find how utterly they are without grasp of the true Catholic doctrine on such fundamental points as the Incarnation, and all the collateral truths into which it ramifies. I am convinced that it is as great a mistake to take for granted that all clerical converts have religious knowledge enough to be received, as all of them who are not married

have a vacation for the priesthood; and I cannot express my sense of the former error more forcibly than by placing it in juxtaposition to the latter.

We come, in the last place, to the treatment of converts after conversion. It would be a miracle of grace, not commonly to be looked for, if those who have been, some of them twenty, and some thirty or forty or even more years, out of the Church, should all at once settle down into the spiritual and moral condition of Catholics who have always lived in the plentitude of her light and privilege. The wonder is not that so many converts should retain after their conversion something of the old leaven, but that from so many among them it should appear to have been purged out so speedily and so well. It will not, I hope be considered any proof of self-complacency in one who is himself an adopted Catholic, to observe how little the actual course of our converts has justified the sinister predictions by which their accession to the Church was preceded. As a body, they have certainly not shown themselves that arrogant, captious, and self-willed community which the enemies of the Church maliciously, and even her friends apprehensively, believed that they were likely to prove. The easy and natural way in which so heterogeneous a mass of elements has been taken up into

the Catholic system and amalgamated with it, is one of the most impressive among the popular evidences of our religion. It is not, however, the less true that converts, as converts, have certain tendencies which make them the fit subjects of special direction. With the mention of some of these, and of the treatment which they require at our hands, I will bring the present lecture to a close.

Converts, like all fresh subjects suddenly imported into a strange sphere, require a certain time to right themselves. That which seemed to Nicodemus an impossibility is in their case a fact; they have to be born again when they are old. They are brought into completely new relations both with the body to which they have previously belonged, and with that to which they have become abruptly attached; and to one or other of these new relations their characteristic dangers may be referred. To the communion they have left they are apt to be affected in two opposite directions, both of which are faulty, because both are opposed to that true mean of right which is always secured by a strict adherence to Catholic principles. While some of them are hardly successful in conquering their pre-Catholic predjudices, others, on the contrary, appear to think it an indication of the Catholic spirit to deny that any good

thing can come out of the communion they have quitted, and turn against it with a vehemence equal to that with which once perhaps they assailed the religion they have now embraced. The first stage of their Catholic life is accordingly apt to be characterized by an indiscreet zeal for proselytism. They are for making converts everywhere and anyhow. They regard the half of their life which was spent out of the Church as time thrown away or worse; the worship from which they once seemed to gather fruits of devotion, they now look upon as an empty form; the education they received at the hands of kind parents or virtuous teachers, as a mere indoctrination in error; and those great principles of right and wrong which the true religion has not reversed but only deepened and sanctified, as the beggarly elements of a dispensation which has been not clothed upon but unclothed. In process of time, however, they arrive at a fuller and truer estimate of their new position; and together with it they are able to look back with more gratitude upon their past moral history and with more hopefulness upon those from whom God still withholds the light in which they themselves rejoice.

Apart from these external relations, converts are liable to certain habits of mind which render them

more or less uneasy in their new home. They do not, so to say, dovetail satisfactorily with the Catholic Church as it is, but in less important matters hold themselves in idea above her or beside her. This is in principle a kind of conceit, and in effect a form of eccentricity; and although it is far less common among converts than might reasonably have been expected, it is nevertheless a temptation against which they have to guard. No spirit is more dangerous than the spirit of the reformer. Closely allied to this temper is that of a sensitive fastidiousness about persons and things. Thus converts are disposed to overlook the great and consistent moral and spiritual excellence of some hereditary Catholic or another, because he does not come up to their standard of refinement. They make too little account of unavoidable differences in education and social antecedents between themselves and those with whom they are suddenly thrown in later age, and with whom they ought to feel how much that is really important and valuable they have in common, rather than to dwell on points of distinction which are purely secondary and subordinate. Then they are apt to have their own notions about this or that Catholic practice; and satisfy themselves that they cannot err in these reserves of judgment because the

practice in question is not actually of faith. They do not like particular devotions, and will hardly allow to others the liberty of choice which they claim for themselves. They are fastidious about the English of the Catholic version, of our older books of devotion. They ride their hobbies about architecture, vestments, church music, and so on. They do not like the Irish. I do not say that these crotchets are peculiar to converts, for they are not; but somehow or other most old Catholics have a steady common-sense way of going on which we converts may do well to copy. The best remedies against all such peculiarities, wheresoever found, consist in thinking less of our individual selves, and more of the end for which we are destined and the work we have to do. Every convert, I repeat, gains from the Church incomparably more than he can possibly bring to it. The prince and the peer may well be content to take their place by the side of the devout poor of the Church; and the most learned doctor of the Protestant schools who is without the knowledge of the true religion, has everything to learn from the well-instructed Catholic child.

## LECTURE IX.

### *THE VISITATION OF THE SICK AND OF PRISONERS.*

Infirmus et visitatis me ; in carcere eram, et venistis ad me.
St. Matt. xxv. 26.

The missionary priest has just retired to rest when a loud single knock is heard at the door of the presbytery. Is it the policeman who comes with laudable but somewhat ostentatious vigilance to let you know that the window of the back kitchen has been carelessly left open? No; it is not the policeman's measured step, and the windows have all been made fast. Or is it one of those numerous petitioners for alms who are apt to throng the doors of our churches and presbyteries? But you will have prudently restricted such visits to the earlier hours of the morning—a restriction you will by no means place upon those calls to the bed of sickness, whose shifting phenomena are like the accesses of time and tide, which wait for no man. The conclusion is inevitable. It must be a 'sick-call'; and it is.

On being admitted, the messenger states that one of the poor parishioners has been taken suddenly ill, and wants to see the priest immediately. The messenger is unable to give any clear account as to the nature of the attack, or the extent of the danger, or to confirm his report by the opinion of a medical attendant, for no one has yet been called in. What is to be done? This is not by any means the first time when the priest has acted on some such message, and found that he might have taken his dinner in comfort, or composed himself for his night's rest, without any risk of serious consequences to the sick person, or of conscientious remorse to himself. May not, he is tempted to argue, this case be one of the number? But, after a moment's reflection, he brings to his mind the fact that, after a succession of some dozen or more of these cases in which he might have put off the visit to a more convenient time, there was one instance in which, without any greater reason for suspecting imminent danger, he found the patient in his agony, and had only just time to administer the last rites of the Church. I fear we must also add, as a possible case, that on one or two occasions he may have postponed the visit, and found on his arrival that he had come too late. Infinitely better than such a disappointment is the delay of a dinner, or

an abridgment even of a night's rest. I know of few things more painful in the life of a priest than the reflection that a parishioner has lost the benefit of the Last Sacraments through any want of alacrity on his part in responding to a sick-call. I do not deny that the patience of our clergy is often severely taxed by the practice which prevails among our poor of calling them in without necessity, and of exaggerating the urgency of the case in order to secure their attendance. There is often no doubt a want of consideration in thus making use of services which, if they are to be generally available, must not be wantonly lavished on undeserving cases. So much I will grant on the side of our priests. On the other hand, I have something to say on the side of the poor. It is surely better, beyond all comparison, that they should err in this extreme than in its opposite. There can be no question that this anxiety for the presence of the priest at the side of the sick, after whatever exceptions to the contrary may be fairly admitted, has its foundation in a deep sense of the importance of his ministrations in sickness and at the hour of death; and especially of those Sacraments on the due reception of which the salvation of a sinner may depend. It is to be remembered, also, that even the best of us unprofessional observers

are very bad judges of the nature and extent of illness, and are far more apt to exaggerate than to underrate its gravity. The Catholic poor look upon the priest as Protestants do upon the physician; and, as every reasonable and humane person would call in a physician where there is the slightest chance of illness being serious, even though in fact it be not so, I hope the time will never come when we shall pass a severe judgment on our poor for summoning the priest in twenty cases, of which nineteen may have been less urgent than their fears had led them to suppose. Be all this as it may, I am sure you will never find reason to regret having resolved a doubt in the matter of a sick-call on the affirmative side. It is a principle of English law that the acquittal of nine guilty persons is a far less evil than the condemnation of one who is innocent. In like manner, I would argue that it is far better to obey nine, or even nine times nine, sick-calls without necessity than, through any general mistrust of them, to allow one person to die without the Sacraments.

The Visitation of the Sick is of all priestly ministrations that which requires at our hands the greatest patience, forbearance, and self-denial. These Christian tempters are liable, as I have already said, to be called into exercise even before the sick person

be visited at all. Priests who have attained to the habitual practice of them, are alone superior to the temptations against them which are apt to be created by the interruptions and inconveniences arising out of this part of their duty. It is trying to be crossed in some favorite occupation, or to have inroads made upon the time set apart for meals, recreation or repose, by a summons about which we are inclined to doubt whether it need be obeyed, or at least obeyed at the moment. Such temptations, however, to annoyance and fretfulness must not only be resisted, but so effectually resisted as to leave no trace of themselves upon our exterior deportment. We must not exhibit on entering the sick room anything like irritation at having been called into it, although, of course, if such call have been perfectly gratuitous and unnecessary it may fitly be the occasion of a calm and dignified rebuke. But in the far more probable case of the call having been at all events excusable, the priest will do well to use no word and betray no feeling which might have the effect of discouraging a recourse to his aid at any future time. When I spoke in a former Lecture of the great importance of kindness and gentleness in the Confessional, I asked you, as a help to such dispositions, to put yourselves as confessors into the position of your penitents, and to act

towards them as you would wish a confessor to act towards you if the relations were to be reversed. I will venture to give you the same advice on the subject with which we are now engaged. Few things are more difficult than for a person in health to realise the peculiar trials and distresses of illness, especially when he does not know them by experience. He is inclined to think that sick persons exaggerate what they suffer in order to obtain sympathy: and I do not deny that this is one of the temptations which sickness brings with it. But there is in all illness, even in that which is not necessarily of a very grave character, so much of discomfort, anxiety, restlessness—so many inexplicable feelings of languor, weariness and distress, to say nothing of actual bodily pain, as may well move us to compassion, and make us fearful of adding by any word or action of ours to a cross which we ought to do everything in our power to lighten. I have said enough on former occasions against that sort of false and affected sympathy which goes by the name of 'petting,' to prevent you from supposing that I have any liking for it or am in any danger of mistaking for it that genuine and manly compassion which I recommend. As nothing grates on the feelings of a person in any kind of bodily or mental

trouble so much as the appearance of harshness or indifference, so it is impossible to exaggerate the soothing power at such times of a kind word, or even of a severe word obviously dictated by kindly feeling or couched in affectionate terms. As in the Confessional, so likewise in the sick room—and indeed in every relation of charity between the priest and individual members of his flock—the first requisite towards the confidence he wishes to inspire is the unequivocal manifestation of a personal interest in the object of his charitable ministrations. I consider it to be one of our greatest dangers, that we are tempted by the multiplicity of our duties and of their objects to merge the individuality of the persons with whom we have to deal in that which belongs to them as a class. It is under a sense of the importance of guarding against this danger that I once more recur to it. You will find it therefore especially necessary to adapt the character of your instruction by the side of the sick, whether it be consolatory or hortatory, to the particular circumstances of the case as known to you by previous acquaintance with the person you are attending, or elicited by what transpires at the time. You will be called upon in the course of your duties to deal with the ignorant, with the hardened, with

those into whose unprepared minds you may have to instil the very rudiments of religion in the shortest possible time, and under the greatest possible disadvantage. You will sometimes, though happily not often, be called to some one whose mind is not merely unfurnished with the elements of Christian knowledge, but even stored with infidel objections. Among our own poor, a far more common case and one far easier to treat is that of those in whom the Faith has never been extinguished, though unhappily obscured or weakened by the effects of habitual neglect, if not formal sin. The advantage of this state, as compared with the former, arises from the fact that appeals, which to the infidel are simply unintelligible, or even the occasion of captious objection, are to those in whom the Faith is only dormant the echoes of sounds once familiar and associated with memories which, by the grace of God, may be kindled into exciting causes of contrition and repentance. There is happily another category to which we may refer no inconsiderable number of the cases presented to us in the course of our experience among the sick—that, namely, of pious and instructed believers, either overtaken by sudden illness in the middle of their Christian course, or anticipating at its close the approach of a change

which, awful as it must always be, has no especial terrors for them. It is the sick or dying bed of these which offers to the priest a train of consolations more than sufficient to make up for all that is laborious and discouraging in this department of his duty. Indeed, it is the rare exception to its consoling associations that he should be compelled to witness an illness without profit, or a death without hope. In enumerating these three classes of sick cases under their spiritual aspects, I am of course making no provision for the undefinable varieties which the spiritual character may assume under the mysterious conditions of illness. I think, however, that these varieties will generally be found to consist in modifications of one or other of the above classes. I will venture, therefore, to offer you a few suggestions on the mode of dealing with each of them.

It is not common, but it is unhappily possible, to meet with cases of infidelity so hardened as even to be made worse, rather than better, by the pressure of bodily illness and the near approach of death. Those pains which force all but the obdurate on appeals to Him who is stronger than man, serve but to erect the mind of the confirmed infidel into an attitude of determined resistance and that fear of

an uncertain future, which has its influence on all but seared consciences, has no power over those who feel themselves bound in consistency to give no place in their thoughts—or at least in their outward manifestation of those thoughts—to a belief which they have for a long time obstinately and avowedly renounced. Cases such as these appear to be the subjects of a miracle of converting grace, rather than of those arguments of which, in less extreme instance, the Divine mercy often makes use as the instruments of saving power. I think that in such cases, a prayer for light and grace, offered at the bed-side of the unhappy sufferer, is the only kind of remedy which the circumstances admit. If death be not imminent, the priest may find it best to quit the sick room with a promise to return, and he will thus gain time for an intervening Mass, in which he may recommend the parishoner to the special care of our Lord. What renders infidelity the more difficult to combat under the disadvantages of illness is, that it almost always involves a real though disguised or unacknowledged atheism. It is, I think, very uncommon to find one who disbelieves in Christianity, and has at the same time any available knowledge of the personality of God. The idea of the Divine Being is with such an one nothing better than a

kind of abstraction, which gives no purchase for those appeals to hope, fear, or gratitude which come naturally to the mind of one who realises the Divine personality. Where you are thus called upon to take a disciple back to the very alphabet of all religion, against the hindrances of bodily illness, and in a limited time, the difficulty is great indeed. Yet I have known instances in which some such happy suggestion as the Holy Spirit often puts into the mind of a priest, deeply animated with the love of souls, has found an unexpected response from a heart which before had seemed to be closed against persuasion, and effected in a moment what might have been thought to be the work of a year. The associations, for instance, of childhood and youth, the recollection of home influences, of a mother's admonition, a sister's example or the like, will often underlie the hard layers of supervening scepticism, and a chance note, struck almost accidentally, may awaken an echo from this lower world of memories, where more formal processes of attack have failed of their effect.

We pass on, in the next place, to the case of those who have not lost their faith, but fallen into habits of neglect and sin. The difficulty of dealing with such cases will depend upon the length of time

during which these bad habits have prevailed, and the consequent depth of the root they have struck into the moral and spiritual character. Those only who have lived up to the time of their illness in the light of the Divine countenance, will have met its startling associations without some degree of conscientious apprehension, and be able calmly to profit by its salutary lessons without the hindrance of saddening or alarming retrospects. The too frequent instance is that of Catholics who in the pride of health and bodily strength have trifled with Divine grace, and require some such crisis as that of a serious illness to awaken them to the sense of their responsibility to an all-knowing Judge. Our great object must be that of getting such Catholics to master the idea and realise the act of a true contrition. Great and inestimable as is the value of the Last Sacraments, it is, of course, too possible that they may be received in a merely formal way, and that the receiver may thus not only miss their fruit but receive them even to condemnation. Hence the importance of their being sought and administered in the less advanced stages of a mortal illness, in order that those who, by long disuse, have fallen out of the way of appreciating the personal conditions on which their efficacy depends, may be duly pre-

pared for them under the special advantages which illness offers to those who are either disposed or disposable towards its profitable warnings. That mind must be more than usually hardened against good impressions which can contemplate, without alarm the prospect of impending judgment, and not welcome with gratitude those ministrations of the Church which are mercifully ordained to smooth the passage of the soul to eternity. The moral associations of illness are eminently favourable to reflection and repentance. Under their power sin loses its fascination and the world its charm. Thoughts of God and Heaven, for which the engagements of active life had before left but little time, have now free space to range without hindrance, especially where the illness is not accompanied by acute bodily pain. Even that pain the patient will have been taught by his kind and compassionate monitor to turn to the best account. He will have been told to interpret it by the light of his Crucifix, and to regard it by that light in its propitiatory aspect. He will have been reminded that chastisement patiently borne on this side of the grave is a satisfaction which the Divine mercy is pleased to accept in the place of severer punishment in the world to come. The priest will perhaps have taught him to connect

particular accesses of pain with special sins of his past life. It will be a great gain if he can be got to accept the sufferings and discomforts of illness not merely with resignation but with gratitude ; and to express that sentiment in some form of words, at least mental, in the moment of severest pain, such, for instance, as ' O God, I thank Thee,' or, ' I offer Thee this pain for my sins in union with the sufferings of my Lord.' An illness, however brief, received in this spirit is worth years of active service, and by the mercy of God may undo years of actual sin. To enumerate even a few of the modes in which illness may be made to contribute to the health of the soul, will be enough to show you that the offices you will be called upon to discharge at the side of the sick and dying bed must not be confined to the mere formal administration of the Last Sacraments, but will require you to visit your spiritual patient often both before and after the reception of those consoling rites, if time should be allowed. The amount of time you will need for enforcing such considerations as I have suggested will depend very much on the disposition of your penitent, whose readiness to receive them may indefinitely supply the place of your power to enforce them. You will find a few practical suggestions such as that of which I gave

an instance above, far more effectual than argument. Illness, which sharpens the feelings, usually blunts and enervates the intellect.

Little needs to be said under the last head; the case of Catholics overtaken by serious illness in a career of consistent piety. These are they who, during life, have never allowed sin or the world to maintain a place in their affections, and who have nothing to learn from temporal reverses, however unexpected, which they have not long known by meditation or by the careful use of past experiences. The humble priest will often feel, in attending the sick bed of such Catholics as these, that they are the teachers and he the learner. He can tell them but little which they will not have anticipated; and the duty of enforcing will be exchanged for the far more pleasing task of reminding. There is but one consideration which they will be inclined to repudiate, though he may be tempted to urge it; the consolation, namely, to be drawn from a good life. In proportion as the Christian advances in sanctity, he advances also in humility, and is penetrated with the sense of unworthiness in the review of those actions which may have filled the observer with just admiration. The thoughts most congenial to him at the approach of death, and those accordingly which

we do best to excite, are such as fall in with the consciousness of shortcomings in all that we do, and represent the infinitude of the Divine compassion as the motive of fervent love and thankfulness. To watch by the bed of Catholics such as these, is the highest privilege and best reward of the zealous priest, and he will require no incentives to this part of his duty but those which its own supreme attraction will supply. The consolatory character of our ministrations among the sick is not a little increased by the fact of their being chiefly directed to the poor. It is impossible to witness the many special privations and sufferings to which the poorer class of Catholics are exposed, more particularly in great cities, and not to feel a hope bordering on assurance, that they are even beyond others the objects of the Divine compassion and forbearance. They, like Lazarus, receive the evil things of life; while those who rarely give them a thought, are daily receiving their good things; and their privations, however mitigated by long use, are such as to bespeak the indulgent love of Him who has revealed Himself as the Father of the poor and the friend of the desolate.

I will conclude with a few words on two subjects not directly connected with one another, but each of

them bearing, though incidentally, on that of the present lecture.

I will speak first of the visitation of the sick in hospitals and other public institutions, such as workhouses and prisons, in which we are often obliged to accommodate ourselves, at some sacrifice of our ecclesiastical feelings, to arrangements which we cannot always control with the freedom we might desire. This is a trial which is every year becoming less, although it has not yet wholly passed away, and is found in some places more than in others. No cause has operated more powerfully in our favour than the wise discretion of many of our clergy, who have endeavoured to win rather than force their way with the authorities of these institutions; as nothing, on the other hand, has more tended to retard in some instances the desired result, than the imprudence occasionally suggested by a mistaken, however laudable zeal. We must never forget to make allowance for the prejudices, possibly honest though blameworthy, with which our religion has to contend in a Protestant country. Still less should we lose sight of the obligation by which those who bear office in these institutions are bound to obey their superiors, and to carry out the regulations which have been framed with a view to order and con-

venience. To such regulations, where not plainly conflicting with any higher duty, the visiting priest ought strictly to conform, and never to lend himself to any infringement of them on the part of the Catholic inmates. He will always find it not merely to his own advantage, but to that of his religion, to observe a considerate and respectful demeanour towards all those who are officially connected with such establishments: and the probable effect of not exacting too much in the first instance, will be that of finding that privileges he had scarcely ventured to expect will be accorded to him without the asking.

The only remaining subject which I will notice is that of the administration of the Sacraments, and especially of the Holy Eucharist, in the houses of Catholics, where the arrangements for their reception are more or less under our control. There are, no doubt, cases in which the extreme destitution of those whom we visit in sickness must be accepted as an apology for every omission, save that of cleanliness and decency, in the preparation for our Lord in His greatest Sacrament. In such extreme cases we must not be too rigorous in exacting those external honours with which we know that our Lord Himself would have dispensed. On the other hand, we do

well to impress upon our flocks that the amount of honour with which He might have been content when on earth, is not generally to be the measure according to which His servants should treat Him in the church.* In a country where we are unhappily compelled to carry the Blessed Sacrament to the sick in a fashion which is only just tolerated by the Holy See, it is the more necessary that nothing should be omitted through negligence in those portions of our duty towards our Lord which are not restricted by the same hindrance. I have seen boxes containing the whole necessary apparatus for the administration of the Blessed Sacrament to the sick; crucifix, candlesticks, burse, holy water vase, and the rest. The case with its sacred contents, if too large for the priest himself to carry, may be sent by the sacristan, or other trusty attendant, to the house of the poor person, and all made ready beforehand for the administration. Perhaps a still better mode of securing the same object of a seemly and reverent preparation, is that of charging such members of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament as are at liberty for the work with this special duty. Such an arrangement has the twofold advantage of impressing

*This idea is beautifully drawn out in the admirable work entitled 'In Spirit and in Truth.'

the poor with the solemnity befitting the act of reception wheresoever it take place, and of providing the members of the confraternity with a work specially appropriate to its character and intention.

The visitation of the sick is one of those duties which belong to every parochial charge. There is another, to which not every priest who has the cure of souls is called, but which is now far more frequently included in missionary work than in former times; I mean the visitation of prisoners. I have already said something on the difficulties and annoyances to which priests are sometimes exposed in Protestant establishments. Our prisons, however, and especially those in connection with Government, are rapidly clearing themselves of the prejudices from which our predecessors and the older among ourselves have formerly suffered, so that no more needs to be observed under this head. A far more interesting and practical question remains for a very brief notice; I mean the spiritual treatment of the unhappy persons who are paying in solitary confinement the penalty of their crimes or misdemeanours. The conclusion to which a long experience of prison duty has led me is, that it affords great scope for ministrations of a very interesting and consolatory character. A considerable number of the convicts,

especially in those penal establishments which are intended for the reception of criminals of the less desperate class, have been piously educated but have strayed into evil courses under the temptations of poverty or through the influence of companions worse than themselves. They are suffering a fearful penalty, it may be for a first offence, and that an offence very probably far lighter in the eyes of God than many of those which are every day committed with impunity by men of the world. Meanwhile the circumstances in which they are now placed are fitted in many respects to co-operate with the saving influences of the Catholic religion. A prison conducted, as is now commonly the case, upon the silent and solitary system, is, if I may so express myself, the skeleton of a monastery which requires nothing but the flesh and blood of Catholic life to animate and invigorate it, but which, in default of that vivifying spirit, is nothing better than an orderly arrangement of dry bones. The silence, the solitude, the punctuality, the unbroken succession of work, meals, recreation, and rest, have nothing to correspond with them, excepting in our own conventual and monastic institutions. But, as the corruption of what is best is ever the worst of evils, so it is that a house possessing the machinery of a monastery

without the spirit which animates and justifies its external arrangements is a mere prison of soul as well as body, instead of being that spiritual paradise in which those who are called by God to the life of religion find their congenial home. We have here indulged in a vision which in a Protestant country like our own is unhappily chimerical. All that we can do is to get that portion of prison-inmates which is placed under our spiritual care to turn to the best advantage those rules of restraint against which the natural man is disposed to rebel. That solitude and seclusion which prisoners are so apt to pervert into an opportunity of calling to mind their former crimes and sins, and of planning sins anew even under the circumstances of penance, we can try and persuade them to use in some way better fitted to help them on the road to reformation. Those rules of duty which seem to them so irksome we can represent as affording constant opportunities of recovering lost graces. To the Irish especially the suggestion to pray and meditate never comes amiss, excepting in those rare instances in which the embers of early faith have entirely died out, and for my own part I have never found, nor will I readily believe, that even the inmates of our prisons form an exception to this rule. The Government of this country, among the

many mistakes it has made, never made a greater than that of placing obstacles between the Catholic priest and Catholic convicts, and now that our statesmen have begun to see their error, I may make this observation without any suspicion of disloyalty. The influence of the Catholic religion, with those who accept its power, is the only instrument of true reformation, while in suggesting higher than human motives for a change of life it tends to secure a result incomparably deeper and more comprehensive than can be effected by any other kind of remedial agency.

In the spiritual treatment of prisoners there are two rules which I think you may observe with advantage. The one is that upon which I have before more than once laid stress; to avoid dealing with your subjects upon which I may call the capitation principle, and to provide for the characteristic distinctions between man and man. This is just what the secular authorities of our prisons will not, and perhaps cannot do. The convicts are denoted by their classes, and are called the 'A men' or the 'B men,' according to the floor they occupy. But of the men thus classified some are old and some are young, some are inveterate offenders, and others are imprisoned for their first offence, some have been

well instructed, while others are quite ignorant, and besides these external differences they differ indefinitely in character and disposition. The other rule which I would offer you is, that you do not act on the supposition that every man in a prison is necessarily a scoundrel. As a matter of fact this is far from being the case, and as you well know, there is no more effectual mode of prejudicing our efforts for good than to start with the impression that they are likely to be made in vain.

## LECTURE X.

### *THE PRIEST IN HIS CHURCH.*

Videte cujus ministerium vobis traditur.
De Ordinatione Subdiaconi.

I have hitherto spoken of the priest in his relations with the people committed to his charge, whether collectively or individually, as in the Confessional, in the Visitation of the Sick, and under other circumstances in which he is called upon to furnish help or consolation to some one or other member of his flock. In the present lecture I shall have to regard him rather in his character as a steward or trustee of the heavenly Mysteries consigned to him, and in respect of duties, whether ecclesiastical or personal, arising out of that momentous office. In this department of my subject, it will be natural to consider those sacred obligations which are more immediately connected with the celebration of divine worship, and with the administration of a church. It will at once be obvious, that

any remarks that I may have to make on this subject will bear far more directly upon such priests as have the principal charge of a church, than upon those who are appointed to assist them. But you will soon perceive that I do not intend to confine myself exclusively to duties which devolve upon the clergy who are more properly said to be in administration, but that what I may say will concern in a measure all who are associated in the care of a Mission. Indeed, our actual system of parochial administration, while it necessarily presumes a certain gradation of rank and authority among the clergy attached to any particular church, is nevertheless adverse, and as I think happily so, to such a distinction between the head priest and his coadjutors as leaves to him any more definite power, or any more distinct priority, than such as is implied in the description 'primus inter pares.'

Every Catholic Church or privileged Catholic chapel contains among its other treasures one of priceless value; and as the charge of this treasure constitutes the especial prerogative of all who in their several degrees are entrusted with their guardianship of such church or chapel, so will its due and reverent preservation form the chief and most responsible subject of their unfailing vigilance.

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This treasure, as I need hardly say, is the Most Blessed Sacrament, and the first care of the priest will manifest itself in providing a safe and honourable dwelling-place for that Divine Saviour, who so generously and lovingly entrusts Himself into the hands of His creatures. I have said that this place should be honourable as well as safe. Now there can be no doubt that the proper place for the Blessed Sacrament is within the sacred precincts of the church or chapel itself, and that the fittest place of all is the Tabernacle on the altar. There are, however, undoubtedly cases in which propriety must in some measure be sacrificed to security, though I am happy to believe that these cases are daily becoming fewer. The expedients for concealing the Blessed Sacrament from observation which were sometimes resorted to under the pressure of a real or supposed necessity in the days of our ancestors, are now superseded by the improved character of our churches, and by an ever-increasing sense of the external honour due to the Sacramental Presence of our Lord. It is no part of my duty to specify the rules prescribed by the Church for the due and reverent custody of the Blessed Sacrament. These rules will either suggest themselves to your own well trained instincts of piety or will be laid down

for your guidance by the proper authority.* You will of course be careful that the Blessed Sacrament be renewed within the period beyond which it cannot be reserved without grave neglect, amounting even to sin; that no sacred vessel except those in which the Blessed Sacrament is contained or which require purification, and far less any other vessels be kept in the Tabernacle; and that the presence of the Blessed Sacrament be always notified by a light burning before it. These and other such prescriptions of reverence depend even less upon the vigilance of superiors than upon the conscientious fidelty of individual priests. This remark indeed is universally true and most worthy of remembrance. Superiors cannot always be at our side. Their duty is abundantly discharged when they have given us instructions; but it rests with us to give effect to these instructions in ways which of necessity cannot habitually come under their observation. The general rule of reverence which applies to the case of the Blessed Sacrament will of course extend to arrangements for Its removal from altar to altar, or from the altar to the room of the sick. A strict attention to the Synodical Decree which forbids us to

* Dr. O'Kane's admirable work on the Rubrics should be in the library of every priest.

open or close the Tabernacle except when properly vested is found to conduce greatly to the edification of those present, as well as to secure on the part of the priest himself those habits of reverence which are so materially promoted by external observances.

The Most Holy Sacrament is in truth the Sun of every Catholic church, which sheds its lustre over all other objects which minister in their various degrees to the beauty of God's House, and the dignity of His worship. Its influence extends from the altar to the church, and from the church to the sacristy. The passage of the Blessed Sacrament from altar to altar, or whensoever notified by the accompanying bell, will be the signal for hushed voice and bended knee within ear-shot of the solemn removal. Holiness, as the Psalmist tells us, becomes the House of God; and although we cannot, unhappily, always secure interior holiness, we must yet endeavour, by all means in our power, to promote its exterior characteristics.

Among the conditions of order and regularity which are so materially connected with the good government of a Catholic church, it is hardly necessary that I should insist on the great importance of punctuality. The time appointed for the several Masses should be adhered to with the greatest possible exactitude. There are of course legitimate

exceptions to this as to other good rules, such for instance as may arise from the paramount duty of attending an urgent sick-call. But our people will never complain of such rare instances of inexactitude in a church which, from the regularity ordinarily observed in the conduct of its sacred offices, has justly acquired a character for punctuality; whereas they will have a very good right to complain if their own observance of appointed times be not met by a corresponding attention to them on the part of their clergy. On Sundays and great holy days, when the hearing of Mass is an obligation, the evil of unpunctuality is of course more apparent than on others days. But it is of the greatest moment to place no obstacle in the way of those good Catholics who make a point of hearing daily Mass; and, as many of these have only a certain half-hour to devote to that purpose before entering on the duties of the day, they will be altogether thrown out if the Mass do not begin at the appointed time, and will soon be tempted to give up their pious practice in despair. What is true of Mass is also true of other offices, and especially of attendance at the Confessional. Any irregularity in the last of these duties is peculiarly hazardous to the spiritual interests of our people. In this and all other departments of our duty we ought to remember

how easily we may give serious offence to our flocks, and unconsciously even do them a mischief, without being in any way reminded of the fact from without. It is impossible to speak too highly of the respect in which the priestly office is held by the Catholics of these islands, and of the extreme unwillingness which is felt, especially by the middle and poorer classes, to think, and still more to speak, evil of the clergy. This fact, added to the kindly forbearance of our episcopal authorities, casts a tremendous responsibility upon ourselves. In the case of any secular employment, a man who neglects his duty is sure to be reminded of it from above or from below. Each particular instance of unpunctuality or neglect is booked against him, and a persistence in his fault is brought home to him by a summary act of dismissal if he be in a subordinate position, or a ruinous loss of confidence in those on whom he depends, if he be his own master. We, on the other hand, may make gradual encroachments on the strict line of sacerdotal duty, without being reminded of it, at least for a long time, by any external token. We may easily attribute the falling off of our people from their duties to any number of causes except the right one, or perhaps even congratulate ourselves upon the diminution of our labours, where we ought rather to

take shame for the indolence or harshness which has thinned our church, or reduced the work of the Confessional to a sinecure. One of the greatest dangers of our office consists in its exemption from what I may call the secondary responsibilities which constitute the protection of others. We live under indulgent authorities, and in the midst of confiding subjects and golden opinions. We seldom meet with opposition or hindrance, except from persons outside the Church who know ltitle or nothing about us, and whose charges are so wide of the mark that we can afford to despise them. I have sometimes thought what a terrible thing it will be for the negligent priest who has been in the habit of keeping criticism at arm's length, and parrying all the thrusts of his conscience by finding excuses for his neglect in the misdeeds or shortcomings of others, to have the truth first brought home to him as he stands before the Judgment Seat.

It has often been said that the character of the parent is written in that of the child, and it is equally true that the external aspect of a church is an index to the spirit prevailing among the clergy who administer to it. A well ordered church is the test of an orderly administration, and a test which makes itself evident almost at first sight. The light

habitually burning before the Blessed Sacrament, the holy water vases continually replenished, the Tabernacle with its silken veil, decent if not rich, the altar duly covered and fronted with its antependium of the appropriate colour, the Sacristan performing his holy work with quietness and reverence, the worshipper making a visit to an altar or an image, added to a general appearance of cleanliness and neatness extending to the minutest particular, the Angelus bell sounding at the appointed time, and the open portal inviting the entrance of the passer-by, not at Mass time only, but during the vacant hours of the day all serve to denote, even to the accidental visitor, some pervading mind of which these phenomena constitute, as it were, the language. It would be painful as it is unnecessary to present the reverse side of this picture. But, where such as I have described is the ordinary aspect of a church, we may feel sure that the mode of celebrating the Divine Offices will be in keeping with it. The Low Masses will be said with that calmness and recollection which bespeak even to the casual observer a devout preparation on the part of the celebrant. The mode of celebration will be neither tediously slow nor indecorously rapid, but such as to manifest that the thoughts of the priest

are with his work and with his work alone. The same spirit will pervade the more solemn offices of religion. The ceremonies which surround the central act of worship, with their exquisite variety, will not be gone through perfunctorily and with the listless apathy of routine, but as by those who feel that each one of them has its deep significance and its devotional value. On this subject you will suffer me to make a few passing observations. One special use of the holy ceremonies of the Mass and other sacred offices is to create or maintain the habit of reverence in those who are engaged in the celebration. They form constantly recurring suggestions of the greatness of the actions in which we are engaged, and tend to secure us against the dangers of familiarity and custom. But if regarded from any lower point of view than as acts of which our Divine Lord is directly or indirectly the object, they serve rather to increase those dangers than to obviate them. Their variety and minuteness, which irreligious or thoughtless persons regard as savouring of pharisaical formalism, constitute in the eye of the intelligent Catholic their especial beauty and peculiar interest. Care, amounting even to punctiliousness, is an unfailing attribute of the highest and purest affection. It indicates an

habitual sense of the claims which a beloved object prefers to our regard, and is the exact reverse of that slovenliness which is the ordinary result of indifference to the master whom we serve, or the friend to whom we profess attachment. In the case before us, again, the reverence with which we comport ourselves in the service of the altar will infallibly communicate itself to our people, and it is impossible that such reverence can be preserved, either in ourselves or in them, unless we regard all the forms which the Church makes essential to the due conduct of her worship as gifted with a true meaning and directed to a holy end.

It is of the utmost consequence towards the due regulation of a church, that there should be a good Sacristan. By a good Sacristan, I do not mean merely one who is able and expert in the discharge of his official duties; because this qualification, though essential is by no means the only, nor in one sense at least the most important requisite. His moral conduct ought to be not only blameless but exemplary; his comportment in the church reverent; his manner towards all applicants for information or assistance, respectful and courteous. On the last mentioned of these qualities I lay especial stress. The officials of a Catholic church, whether employed

in the sacristy, in the presbytery, or in the church itself, are often exposed to severe provocation from the behaviour of some person or other among the multitudes of all ages, classes, and characters, with whom they are, from time to time, brought into contact. But the same trials of temper which should suggest to us the duty of allowance for exceptional faults, become an occasion of constant watchfulness to those who are exposed to them, and should make us peculiarly careful in selecting for these offices such persons as are possessed of the requisite amount of patience and self-control. The Sacristan, moreover, possesses opportunities of influence for good or evil which render his office one of especial importance. He is necessarily brought into constant and immediate connexion with the boys and young men who take part in the sacred offices; and, while a bad example on his part would certainly prove contagious, he may, on the other hand, act as a powerful auxiliary to the clergy in maintaining, not only correctness of external conduct, but, what is infinitely more important, a proper moral and ecclesiastical spirit among his subordinates. In fact, he may render much the same service to the priest in the administration of a church, which the late Dr. Arnold used to derive from the best head boys of his school,

who acted as channels of influence between him and the juniors. The rector or head priest of a church will find it of advantage, in more than one way, to delegate to the chief of the sacristy a right of control over the various junior orders, whether acolyths, thurifers, serving-boys, or the like, reserving, of course, to himself an appellate jurisdiction. In default of this provision he will be liable, while preparing for Mass, to be accosted by some little rosy-cheeked petitioner for office, with such, words as, 'Please, Father, may I serve Boat.'*

One of the chief difficulties which are apt to occur in the administration of a church, consists in determining when to yield to the suggestions or objections of individual parishioners, and when to withstand them. These interpellations are sure to arise, especially in the earlier stages of an administration, and the frequency with which they will be offered, and the urgency with which they will be pressed, will depend very much upon the way in which they are received. Your imagination will readily supply specimens of their nature. The preaching, the ceremonial, the arrangements of the church, and, more

* It may be necessary for the sake of some readers to explain that the 'boat' (navicula) is the small vessel containing the incense from which the thurible or censer is supplied, and the bearer of this vessel is known in our sacristies by the name of the vessel itself.

than all, the music, will suggest to critical spirits regularly recurring subjects of kindly hint or officious interference. You will have anonymous letters in abundance; for one characteristic of parochial criticism is a peculiar preference of the incognito. One person complains that your sermons are too strong or too long; another that the church is too cold or too close; another objects that the boys bring nuts into church; another, that the tenor sings out of tune; and so on. These criticisms, though generally, are not always unfavorable; but I do not know whether the compliments are not sometimes more distressing than the objections. This is peculiarly the case in the choral department. The 'angelic voice' of some 'dear boy,' for instance, is a subject of eulogy which taxes the good nature of the ecclesiastically-minded priest. Sometimes the criticism takes the form of a gracious request, such as that a person who is very fond of music may be indulged next Sunday with 'that charming *Benedictus.*' Now, in this enumeration I have purposely included one or two criticisms which are neither unreasonable nor impertinent; but, on the contrary, such as may be most legitimately offered, and ought very possibly to be admitted and acted on in practice. I have so included them in order to show you

that I would by no means advise you to turn a deaf ear to such observations, or indiscriminately to treat them as impertinences. I think, on the contrary, that we may often derive assistance from them, and that we should never treat them with severity except when they are expressed in disrespectful terms, or betoken a spirit of interference which ought to be repressed. On the other hand, I am convinced that we ought resolutely to act on a definite principle in such matters, and to set our face against all attempts to make us depart from our rule, out of a spirit of timid compliance. It is of supreme importance that we should adopt no arrangements, and especially that we should make no changes in our church, except after the most mature deliberation ; and no less important that, when such changes have been made, we should not too easily retrace our steps. The effect of yielding to capricious suggestions would be that we should be always changing, since it is probable that what pleases one person may displease another. There are few things more injurious to a church than any tokens of caprice or inconsistency in its administration, and few things more favorable to it than the appearance of stability. It not unfrequently happens that a change, not otherwise than good in itself, is undesirable simply

because it is a change. In short we shall often do well, in ecclesiastical as well as political affairs, to bear in mind the conservative advice of the Delphian Oracle about 'Camarina:'

> 'Disturb her not, for she is best
> When let alone, and left to rest.' *

I may here mention one further objection to the spirit of a too facile compliance with the suggestions of our people. It almost invariably happens that those who make these suggestions are not the poor, but what are called 'the more respectable members of the congregation,' and I need not tell you how easily, and how perilously to his character and influence, a priest may imperceptibly glide into the dangers of secularity and favouritism.

There is one class of popular objections which you will not be so apt to encounter as the priests who have gone before you, but which are not as yet so completely silenced as to exempt you altogether from liability to them. The objections to which I refer are those which some few years ago were so commonly urged against the adoption of what were called novelties. In days gone by, there was a prevalent and very excusable nervousness in the minds

* Μὴ κίνει Καμάριναν, ἀκίνητός γαρ ἀμείνων.

of many English Catholics about the introduction into our churches of, what they would have called, importations from the Continent. In arrest of these objections, it might be enough to say that, if they had been allowed their way, such churches as those of the Oratory of St. Philip would never have existed ; and it is one of the many obligations which we all owe to the Fathers of that Congregation, that they have paved our way towards a type of religious worship far higher and far truer than many of us might have had the courage to introduce without so valuable a precedent. The fact is, that many of the foreign practices of devotion, which till recently were all but unknown in England, and so congenial to the truest religious instincts that they needed but to be known in order to be appreciated ; and it is not less a proof of the extensive prevalence of those instincts among English Catholics, than of the intrinsic excellence of the satisfaction thus provided for them, that these practices have completely triumphed over the unpopularity with which they were at first received. In your holy crusade against all such prejudices, you will find a powerful alliance in the ranks of our poor, who take things naturally instead of viewing them through the crooked medium of rationalistic antipathy. To them it seems as obvious to kiss the

relic of a Saint as the picture of a departed friend, and they no more associate the idea of idolatry with an image borne in procession, than with the professional emblems or symbols of any social or popular institution. I love their simple faith and warm-hearted devotion. The spirit which would check it, would equally have repelled the poor woman who kissed the hem of our Saviour's garment, or the fervent disciple who poured ointment on His head. In these our days more especially, I am a great deal more fearful of rationalism than of superstition, though I would not consciously encourage either. True faith has its lodgment on very delicate ground, and if we be too eager to pluck up the tares, we shall be in danger of rooting out the wheat also. Our holy religion has a definite and distinct character of its own which must not be invaded. It cannot be protestantised nor popularised, though it is sure to find out its own, if we make the rules of the Church our law, and mould our tempers and characters on her spirit. Hence, we should be especially careful to maintain intact her august ceremonial, and to carry out without fear of unpopularity her heavenward provisions; treating as most practical realities her exorcisms, her benedictions, her sacraments and sacramentals, how

alien soever to the habits and views of an unbelieving world.

You will thus perceive, reverend and dear brethren, that, as I stated in the outset of this lecture, the duties on which I have touched in the course of it are by no means confined to the priest who is principally responsible for a church and mission, but extend in their measure and degree to other priests, who, if the mission be a considerable one, will be joined with him in the care of it. In fact, it is impossible for the principal priest of a church to administer it effectively if he be not seconded in his views and aims by his coadjutors. On this most important topic I shall have occasion to speak more at length in the next lecture. In connection with the subject of the present one, I will but observe how materially the efficiency of a church is promoted by the spirit of zealous co-operation on the part of all the clergy connected with it. Where they regard the work of each as the work of all, they will do that work as to the Lord and not as to men. They will not limit their service to those things merely which in strict duty they are bound to do, but take part in religious offices from which they might absent themselves without reproach, but their presence at which, while it is a benefit to themselves, serves also to

enhance the dignity and increase the effect of divine worship. Their voices will be heard in the Vesper choir, although they might find plausible excuses for absenting themselves from it, and they will be seen at other Masses than their own. It is in ways like these that the ecclesiastical spirit is at once tested and fostered. When we are at college, that spirit thrives in its own congenial atmosphere, but on the mission it has to battle with the cold blasts of the world, and stands in need of constant external support. If you lay its foundation deep in the spring-time of your ecclesiastical life, it will, by the grace of God, survive all the shocks of which it is ever likely to be exposed; and you will always look back with thankfulness upon your use of opportunities so precious yet so precarious. The ecclesiastical spirit is that abiding warrant of Divine approval, which stimulates the priest in all his duties and consoles him in all trials and disappointments. Without it, every duty is a burden, and every cross a torture; but, in its light and under its power, the truth is brought home to us of those beautiful words with which Holy Church places us under the yoke of her service—'Accipe jugum domini; jugum enim ejus suave est et onus ejus leve.'

## LECTURE XI.

### *THE PRIEST IN HIS PRESBYTERY.*

Alter alterius onera portate, et sic adimplebitis legem Christi.
GAL. vi. 2.

THE progress of our religion in this country has given us not only good churches, but commodious presbyteries as their appendages. All honour to our worthy predecessors who were contented and happy in their humble chapels and inconvenient lodgings. It must be admitted, however, that the change is for the better in its domestic, as well as in its ecclesiastical bearings. Certainly, it implies a transition from the missionary to the parochial character. But a London lodging-house does not bear any greater resemblance to a missionary's tent than to a rector's parsonage. It has the discomfort of the former without its simplicity, and the civilisation of the latter, without its respectability. Of all priestly habitations, a first or second floor in a lodging-house, with a female servant to wait, is the most unecclesiastical.

The great advantage of a presbytery in connexion with a church is, that it enables the priests who have the charge of a parish or mission to live together. The benefits of this arrangement are manifold. In the first place, it protects the priest against the temptations of a solitary life. These temptations are numerous, and among them may be mentioned those which lie in the direction of selfishness, moroseness, eccentricity, and low spirits. These habits of mind, and all such as are akin to them, are capital enemies to ecclesiastical life and priestly influence. To be thrown habitually with others, and especially with associates not entirely of our own choice, is a great help towards opening the heart, softening prejudices, and smoothing down those little inequalities of character which are apt to come of allowing the thoughts to run too exclusively in one groove. To this advantage must be added the tendency of association to produce unity of view and action among those who are engaged in parochial work. Again, priests who live together have many opportunities of talking over their several duties, comparing their experiences, and elucidating questions of the deepest practical interest. Where debarred from following up their collegiate studies, they may do much towards refreshing their recollection of what they

have formerly learned, by means of conversation upon cases in moral theology which come up in the course of their regular ministrations.

It will be obvious, however, that the advantages thus supposed depend in no small degree upon the desire existing among the priests themselves to turn their common life to good account. A disunited family is the most painful of solitudes to the members who compose it, and a house of clergy divided against itself would form but a sorry exchange for the hermit life whose evils it is intended to rectify. But such a case is sufficiently rare to be dismissed from practical consideration. Let us rather dwell upon the happier picture of a body of clergy living together under the same roof, not indeed under any rule of restraint which would clash with the freedom necessary for the discharge of their several official duties, nor with the necessary recreation which is in itself one duty among others, yet with a due observance of those laws of domestic regularity which are essential to the order and well being of any family whatsoever. They will rise, if not at the same hour, yet at all events early enough to allow to each the requisite time for preparation before Mass. They will meet at all meals which are taken in common, and at other times when their several occupations are such

as to admit of being gone through together; and they will retire to rest, so far as may be, at an hour sufficiently early to admit of its being taken without encroachment upon the precious moments of the morning. Whether they arrange their several shares in the work of the mission according to weeks or districts, they will so arrange them as that no employment of minor importance shall take precedence of that work, or interfere with its regular and ordinary discharge. They will make especial provision for attendance upon the night-calls; guarding to the utmost of their power against the possibility of those most important calls being unheeded. In their daily missionary experience, and in the questions arising out of it, they will find an unfailing subject of interesting and useful conversation, and, as I need hardly add, will be careful to exclude from that conversation all topics which may in the remotest degree involve any offence against purity or charity. They will be slow to indulge in any criticisms upon the members of their flock which do not in some way tend to their moral and spiritual profit. They will carefully abstain, when conversing in detachments, from any disparaging remarks upon the character or manner of an absent colleague, and will in this, and all similar

prescriptions of charity, act as far as possible upon the rules observed by Religious in their hours of recreation.

Nothing so much contributes to the spirit of union between the several members of a flock, and between all of them and their appointed guides, as the careful cultivation of the same spirit among the clergy to whom they look up. They are extremely quick in detecting anything like a breach of that spirit among us, and I am sorry to say that they are sometimes on the watch for it. One of the greatest calamities which can befal a parish is the growth of party cliques, and it is absolutely in the power of the clergy either to promote or to annihilate those miserable combinations. Where they receive no encouragement nor even any recognition on the part of the clergy, they are sure to die out in the course of a short time ; but even the suspicion that any of the clergy regard them with sympathy, or take a side in the questions that give rise to them, has the effect of making them spread like wildfire. It needs no ordinary prudence on our part to deal with such a situation of affairs. An incautious word may add fuel to the flame, and even a well-meant attempt to compose these differences may aggravate the disease it is intended to remedy. The most prudent course

will generally be found to be that of ignoring their existence ; for there are quarrels which to recognise is to foment. The *pabulum* of all such heartburnings is gossip, which I advise you to shun as a pestilence, and to turn a deaf ear to it when it is forced upon your attention. It is a pleasant thing enough, in the estimation of some people, to gossip about others, but by no means so pleasant to find that they are in turn themselves the victims of the law they have incautiously set in motion. The critic of other people is as sure to be criticised as is the listener to hear ill of himself.

With a view to avoid the evils of party-spirit in a parish, it is of the utmost importance to have discreet and trustworthy domestics. A chatterbox of a housekeeper may do you an injury which you may find it hard to repair. It sometimes happens that when mischievous folk find that they cannot make any impression on the master, they will try to get the servants into their confidence. I cannot say that I am here speaking from any experience, but I have heard of such things, and quite believe them to be possible. It is no small blessing to a body of clergy to possess an orderly and united household. To this end, the head of the establishment will do well to direct his unremitting attention. He will

not only use great care in the choice of his servants, but will keep a kind yet observant eye upon them, and make it his especial study to promote a spirit of charity among them. The two parties between whom it is usually most difficult to keep peace are the cook and the errand boy, and any establishment in which these two important functionaries are at one, may be safely congratulated on its tranquillity.

While I am on the subject of domestics, I wish to say a word upon the importance of treating them with the greatest kindness and consideration. A priest's house should be a model in this respect. I take it for granted that he will have about him such servants only as are worthy of his confidence. But, this being supposed, he ought to set an example of that Christian thoughtfulness about those of humbler station who are continually labouring in his cause, which presents so beautiful a contrast to the cold reciprocity of heartless service and inconsiderate exaction by which worldly households are too often characterised. The first and principal care of the priest will of course relate to the moral and spiritual interests of his domestics. But, these being secured by a kindly yet not suspicious or inquisitorial vigilance, he will be likewise studious of their health, comfort, and innocent recreation. He will by every

means in his power discourage the reception into his house of persons who are not known to him for their virtue and trustworthiness, while yet he will never grudge to his servants the liberty of exercising under his control that spirit of hospitality which, according to the Apostle, should mark the character of every ecclesiastical household. A generous mode of dealing with those who are under us, is, I am convinced, in the long run, the best preservative against deception and imposition. Where abused, it must be exchanged for a sterner rule. But the loss which may now and then follow upon a misplaced confidence is, as a general rule, far less costly than the consequences of a more ungenerous policy, and is even a gain in comparison with the misery incident to a state of mutual suspicion.

As a priest in a presbytery, you will be either the head priest or one of his coadjutors, and in all probability the latter before you are the former. Your line of conduct will of course be regulated by your position, and I will begin by sketching that of the relation in which you will first be placed. The second or third priest on a mission has his own especial duties and temptations. Among his duties will of course be that of recognising a joint interest in the welfare of the church to which he is attached,

and in all which belongs to it; and this duty will branch out into a number of particulars. He will zealously unite in all works which have for their object the spiritual or temporal welfare of the mission, and will be especially careful to avoid whatever may increase the burthens or add to the anxieties of administration. He has also his own temptations. He is tempted to think that he is too dependent, and that his wants and wishes are not sufficiently consulted. Perhaps it may be so, and this is a case which will come under our notice when I consider the temptations and corresponding duties of the head priest. But, whether it be so or not, the temptation itself belongs to the situation, and is one which, if yielded to, will make your life needlessly uncomfortable. I am here supposing that the temptation in question is without any substantial warrant. But I will add that the head priest, who has probably known it by experience, is peculiarly bound to avoid those faults or defects of conduct or manner which are apt to feed it. Again, it is our tendency to imagine that we could ourselves manage things ten times better than the people who happen to have the charge of them, as I myself was inclined to do when I was a junior priest. In this and other such ways, it is a great advantage to a priest to have passed through

a subordinate position, provided only that he be sensible of that advantage.. It gives him experience of the trials of others who now occupy the place which was formerly his own, and disposes him at once to sympathise with their difficulties, and as far as possible to assist in relieving them. I have formerly said that the relation of a head priest to that of his colleagues is that of primacy and not of supremacy, and this relation seems to imply on the part of his juniors a certain claim to be consulted in matters of administration, not inconsistent with the right of ultimate decision which the due ordering of every establishment requires to be vested in a single person. If, however, the priest at the head of the establishment discharge his trust with moderation, prudence, and charity, he will take away from his juniors all reasonable ground of complaint. He will ever regard them as fellow-workers with himself in the vineyard of our Lord, and will thus be desirous of sharing their burthens, bearing with their infirmities, and helping their joys. He will assert no prerogatives, and claim no exemptions inconsistent with that equality which belongs to the condition of priests labouring in a common cause, and with a view to a common end. He will take his part in all parochial duties, and more than his part where his colleagues

are prevented by weak health or other such unavoidable necessity from rendering him the usual assistance. He will never listen to tales nor observations intended or calculated to prejudice him against them, and he will expect from them in return the same consideration and forbearance which he feels that they have a right to claim at his hands. In short, he will leave them no excuse in his own practice for breaking in upon that *esprit de corps*, or, as I prefer to call it, that community-spirit, which is in itself so material a source both of happiness and strength. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! The holy Psalmist tells us that it is like the precious ointment which ran down from Aaron's beard even to the skirt of his garment. And thus it is that the effect of union and hearty co-operation in the clergy of a mission, is felt even to the remotest corners of their parish. It communicates itself, first to their household, and so on to the various lesser circles of which every larger society is made up. These lesser circles, if charity be but diffused, present no hard outlines, but, like those we have sometimes seen on the face of the waters, are lost in one another so soon as they come into contact, and are finally absorbed in the stream on whose bosom is reflected the image of the heavens.

It is in the world that is to come, and there alone, that this picture will be perfectly realised. But even on earth are to be seen the shadows of it; primarily, of course, in the Church at large, but partially in her detached portions where permeated by that Holy Spirit whose law is charity and whose fruits are peace.

I have here all along supposed the case of a priest in community, or at least with a colleague. But what if he be the single priest of a Mission, and that too in the country? Much that I have here said will then be out of place. The aids, the consolations, the incitements, the opportunities, which association offers, will all be wanting, and the solitary priest must look chiefly to internal resources for that support which comes in great measure from without to those in large towns and more populous Missions. The situation is a trying one, whether to the young priest fresh from college, or to the older one accustomed to society. Its trials are various. A trial it must needs be to spend day after day where there are no means of interchanging thought with a like-minded fellow-labourer; to pass from wearisome duties to solitary meals, and from solitary meals to lonely recreations, and from those recreations back to duties, with no one to solve perplexities, or share experiences or lighten troubles. But trials, more-

over are generally akin to dangers. One of these dangers is, that the priest may become a prey to low spirits. Another, that he may grow narrow-minded. Another, that he may be tempted to take up with undesirable companions, or become the victim of undesirable influences. The lawyer may mis-persuade him, or the parson may patronise him, or the squire may pamper him, or some old house-keeper may manage him. You may reply that, after all, the country has many advantages over the town, and I do not deny it. But I am anxious to discover some panacea which will make our priest independent of all the accidents of locality and personal taste. You say, perhaps, that it is no small advantage to live in a pure atmosphere, and among simple-minded people, and in the midst of the beautiful scenes of nature. But a solitary Mission does not necessarily involve all or any of these attractions. Our priest may be set down in the fens, or in the black country. He may escape the asthma to encounter the ague ; or his lot may be cast among those whose faces are as black as their habitations, and their souls not a great deal brighter. Or, even if the circumstances of place be more favourable, he may have no taste for the pursuits of the country. He may have no liking for a garden, for poultry, or

a farm. What, then, are to be his compensations for the loss of society and the various interests of the metropolis or some large provincial town? In the first place, they are to be found in the thought that his trials, be they what they may, are light in comparison with those to which every priest renders himself liable, when he consecrates himself to the service of his Redeemer. What can any priest suffer in these tranquil islands of ours which is to be compared with the perils of a Chinese missionary, or with the exercise of missionary functions in a tropical climate? What are the trials of the country priest, even under the greatest disadvantages, by the side of those which many a priest in London or our large provincial towns, who has gone to his reward, underwent during one or other of the fearful cholera or fever campaigns of a quarter of a century ago? Our remedy against all repining thoughts is to be found in the reflection that we have consecrated ourselves to Him, who will never lay upon us more than He enables us to bear, and who repays our sacrifices with proportionate rewards. There are, however, two prescriptions, in subordination to those of a higher kind, which I will venture to propose to you as safeguards against the dangers and temptations of a solitary life.

The first of these prescriptions is, that you cultivate during your college course a great love of reading. Should your missionary life be cast in the country, you will probably enjoy an advantage which is wanting to the priest who exercises his office in a town ; the opportunity, I mean, of devoting a considerable portion of your time to the prosecution of your college studies, or to the general improvement of your mind. The other counsel I would give you is that of fostering, by all means in your power, the spirit of your vocation. This spirit, like the musical ear, constitutes a kind of sixth sense. It gives a perception of beauty which is unknown to those who want it. It invests the darkest sights with the hue of the rose, and awakes in the dreariest solitudes the songs of the desert. As some one has said of a very different subject, it doubles joys and cuts cares in halves. It is that bright medium through which the holy Psalmist surveyed all the objects around him ; which caused God's holy law to flash before his eyes with the brilliancy of gold, or of the topaz, and solved all the perplexities of our human condition by that light of the Sanctuary which shows in their true colours the fleeting triumphs of the wicked, and the sure, however tardy, consolations of the good.

# LECTURE XII.

## *THE PRIEST IN HIS SOCIAL AND COLLATERAL RELATIONS.*

In fine autem, omnes unanimes, compatientes, fraternitatis amatores, misericordes, modesti, humiles.—1 St. Pet. iii. 8.

We have now considered the priest in his chief spiritual relations with the Body Mystical, with the members of his flock in general, as a preacher or teacher, with the young, with the sick and imprisoned, with applicants for instruction in the faith, with penitents, and with those who come to him for advice on subjects not falling strictly within the province of the Confessional. We have also considered him as the guardian of our Divine Lord in His Sacramental Presence, and in the various duties flowing out of that sublimest and in many ways most responsible of his offices. Our last lecture regarded him chiefly in his character as the colleague of other priests associated with him in his work, and as the master of a household. I will now complete this

necessarily imperfect exposition of sacerdotal duties, by viewing him in his different social relations, whether with his own parishioners or others.

I owe you an explanation for thus drawing a distinction between the spiritual and social duties of the priest, as if it were possible that his social could ever be separated from his spiritual character. This, you know, is not what I mean. The priest must never forget that he is a priest, nor lose sight of the end for which he has been consecrated to the service of his brethren. But it is obvious that there are ways in which he promotes this end directly, and others in which he promotes it indirectly; and it is these latter, in contradistinction from the former, of which I am now about to speak.

I will begin by considering him in the society of his own parishioners. He will find them always ready to exercise hospitality towards him, and it will not be easy for him to draw the line between excess and deficiency in accepting their invitations. It will be impossible for him to accept all, consistently with the duties of the church, which must often require his presence in the evening. On the other hand, it would be difficult for him to make a selection without giving offence. No rule can be laid down on such a subject, except that we must be careful to

furnish no ground for jealousies, or the suspicion of capricious preferences. A priest, especially in some of the less popular missions, will soon find that social intercourse with his parishioners is quite as often a duty of charity as a means of personal recreation. He must either refuse invitations altogether, or participate in some festivities which will tax his good-nature and exercise his self-denial quite as much as many of his severer duties. He may have to sit out a dull dinner-party with uncongenial companions on a hot day in summer. He may have to carve a round of beef for thirty hungry children at a Christmas party. He may have to adapt himself to the tastes and manners of the poorer members of his flock at some rural entertainment where his presence will tend to promote innocent mirth and to check dangerous excesses. On these and similar occasions he will find it necessary to put a restraint on his natural inclinations, in order to confer upon those for whose happiness he is responsible that especial gratification which good Catholics of every class derive from the sympathy and society of their priest. In these ways also he will be able to satisfy his social obligations without the necessity of morning visits, which, unless directed to some special purpose of charity, are mere inventions for killing

time and hatching gossip. I am convinced, however, that the secular priest must recognize the duty of some kind of social intercourse with his people, as one from which he cannot dispense himself without the certainty of losing much valuable influence, if not of drawing upon himself an odium which, however unmerited, may prejudice his work more than he is aware. At any rate, however he may find himself compelled by the pressure of more important duties to restrict personal intercourse with his parishioners, it will be absolutely necessary that he should recognize courtesy as a distinct duty, and for which no amount of zeal or interior kindness can compensate. Under the name of courtesy I include, of course, that urbanity of manner and those habits of thoughtfulness about others which constitute the very essence of Christian kindness, as exemplified in the life of our Saviour, and so constantly inculcated in the teaching of His Apostles.

So far as I have regarded social intercourse as a priestly duty, for such it surely is where it tends to promote a friendly understanding between the priest and the members of his flock. The same cannot be said of social intercourse in general, which, so far from falling in with the highest ends

of our vocation, may possibly tend to prejudice them. The active priest will probably find but little time for general society, and will not be over-anxious to seek it if duly impressed with the Saint's remark, that he who lives much in company usually returns home a somewhat worse man than he left it. Although, however, social intercourse with those for whom the priest is not directly responsible may not fall under the category of duty, and may easily tempt a priest to enter more into the world than is good for him, yet I have no wish to make it the subject of any rigorous prohibition. If it be not a duty, it may at any rate, where kept within due limits, be a very legitimate recreation. The priest who occasionally mixes in cultivated society may both give and receive benefit. But this interchange of mutual advantage will depend, not only on the character of the society itself, but on the manner in which he mingles with it. A few words on this subject may serve as a guide towards the right use of social intercourse in general. The priest in society must never forget that he is a priest. Even if he forget it others will not. The ambiguous jest, the anecdote of questionable propriety, the loose and unguarded manner, with other such indications of the unpriestly character, will be remembered and

perhaps quoted against him when the evening is over, and when its warping influences have given way to calmer thoughts and cooler judgments. The same persons who, in the spirit of hospitable good-nature, have placed in his way the inducements to those excesses which at least weaken morality, if they do not occasion scandal, will be among the first to criticise the indiscretions to which they have helped to give rise. The demeanour of a priest in society should always be marked by humility, modesty, courtesy, and prudence. He should be swift to hear and slow to dogmatize. He should avoid arguments, except when necessary for the vindication of truth; and, when thus necessary, he should maintain his side with meekness, and in the spirit of charity. On the whole, however, it is better for him to avoid companies in which important truths are likely to be attacked, than to risk the danger of defending them weakly, or under excitement.

The last remark leads me to consider the question of association with non-Catholics. This is a matter on which again it is very difficult to lay down any invariable rule. In a country like our own, it is impossible to avoid a certain amount of intercourse with Protestants; and, if conducted with discretion, such intercourse may serve the purposes of religion

no less than those of charity. I do not think, as I have said more than once, that these purposes will generally be answered by means of controversy, which is far too serious a thing to be hazarded at a dinner-table or a tea-party. The good I should expect to arise from social intercourse between a priest and those who are not of our religion, is that of removing the prejudices and correcting the mistakes which prevail so extensively on the subject of the Catholic Church, its clergy, institutions, doctrines, and observances. The evil by which this good would be counterbalanced, and a very serious evil too, would be that of endeavouring to remove these misunderstandings by anything like a compromise of our essential principles. But there is a happy medium between stiffness and laxity which must not be overlooked merely because it is difficult to hit. It is possible, as is proved by many living examples, to combine the deepest devotion to the true interests of the Church with the largest allowance for the disadvantages of those who are unhappily separated from her communion, added to a practical desire that the chasm which must ever divide Catholics and Protestants in matters held most important by both, may not be widened by needless differences. We all know what is the conven-

tional type of a Catholic priest which passes current in the world, and we know, also, how little that type corresponds with the reality. The more we act up to the true priestly standard, the more we shall tend to rectify this impression in all candid minds. We shall prove to the world, however slow may be the process of conviction, that the true Catholic priest has but one great aim, which he pursues without being turned to the right hand by the fear of ridicule, or to the left by the blandishments of flattery. We shall prove that he is simple and straightforward where he is supposed to be crafty and designing; that avarice and ambition are not the motives of his zeal for souls, but the honour of his Lord, the propagation of truth, the elevation of morals, and the eternal salvation of those for whom Christ died. We shall show how possible it is to unite the hatred of religious error with the love of those who are enthralled by it, and to discriminate between the evils of an heretical system and the accidental good so often found in those who are the subjects of it. The mitigation of the prejudice which operated so extensively against Catholics of a former time, is due in no small measure to the removal of those barriers which were at once the effect of that prejudice and its constantly reproducing cause. Only let us

beware that, in escaping from one extreme, we do not run into the other, and, in our desire of uniting with our separated fellow-countrymen, where union is clear of compromise, lose sight of our irreconcilable differences of faith and principle, and mistake the growth of religious indifference for the expansion of Catholic charity.

Among the social relations of the priest I include those ties by which he is bound to the members of his own family. These ties may be maintained without any such amount of personal intercourse as may clash with more immediate duties, though not necessarily to the exclusion of that intercourse where circumstances admit of it. It is often rather a misfortune than an advantage to the priest to be located in the neighborhood of his home. In devoting himself to the work of his vocation, he has renounced, once for all, the attractions of the domestic life, in the common acceptation of that term, and must beware of being afterwards ensnared by them in another form. If I mistake not, the authorities on whose judgment the local position of our clergy as a rule depends, are usually averse from placing them in the neighborhood of their own natural relations, under the salutary fear of influences which are all the more likely to undermine the ecclesias-

tical spirit because they are in their own nature so amiable and so irreproachable. But as the separation of the clergy from their own family connexions is not always possible, it may be well to say a few words as to the conditions which may render that intercourse valuable as a means of mutual advantage, which, apart from those conditions, may weaken both the character and influence of the priest. In the first place, the members of our own family, and especially our parents, have a claim on our affectionate interest which no superior claim can invalidate in its essence, however it may modify its operation. That claim has its highest and best recognition in our communication with God in prayer, and especially in the Holy Sacrifice, where we can unite in the Sacred Heart with the absent and live with the departed. No greater reproach could be brought against a priest than that want of natural affection which St. Paul has branded with the note of inhumanity.* This being once admitted, the mode in which that affection may be exercised must depend on circumstances which are more or less out of our control, with the single exception of those intercessions at the altar and in our daily prayers, which no circumstances can hinder and no other kind of charity supersede.

*See 2 Tim. iii. 3.

With respect to personal communication with those who are bound to us by the ties of near relationship, we shall do well to regulate that communication by two limitations ; the first, that it shall never draw us away, either in act or in spirit, from the duties of our vocation ; the second, that it shall involve no compromise of character or principle whereby we may lose ground, as priests of the Most High, in the eyes of those who are under the temptation of regarding us from a more ordinary point of view. But what if our kindred, or some of them, happen to be Protestants ? In that case the necessity of reserve and prudence will be proportionately increased. Yet I am as far as possible from saying that a priest may not usefully keep up personal communication with Protestant relatives under this restriction. There will always be much common ground on which he may meet with them without unworthy concession; and by meeting them on that common ground he may, without even the direct consciousness of any ulterior object, gradually prepare a platform from which to address their hearts with motives and attractions of a higher kind. Protestants are fully alive to the value of those social virtues which the Catholic practices on grounds which they do not always appreciate but the results

of which they are among the first to admire. It frequently happens that the antipathy felt by Protestant families to the Catholic religion is gradually subdued by intercourse with their converted members, and ends in a reaction of feeling and opinion which has been the first step to their own conversion.

I know of no way in which a priest is apt to win on the confidence of non-Catholic relatives or friends which is at once so effectual and so natural as that of administering consolation to them in the time of affliction. Affliction it is which softens the feelings, dispels prejudice, undermines the power of the world, and throws the sufferer on the support of those who know best how to speak to the heart. None possess this key so universally, or know how to use it so well, as Catholic priests thoroughly imbued with the spirit of their vocation. A timely word spoken in conversation, or addressed by letter at a moment so favourable, while it is a duty irrespective of all results, is often found to have its reward in a total and permanent change of the mutual relations between the convert priest and the objects of this truest and best appreciated kind of charity. I have known a case where a Protestant family under affliction has been so far drawn towards one of their

members who was a Catholic priest, and with whom in that character they had previously manifested no sympathy, as to ask him for the help of his prayers in the Holy Sacrifice.

The next of the social, or rather collateral, relations incident to the condition of a priest which I have space to notice, is that which subsists between himself and other priests of the same or some neighboring diocese. I need hardly insist upon the duty of a kindly and generous fellow-feeling towards our brethren, because there is every natural inducement to cultivate such a temper, and none which in ordinary cases militates against it. Among the pleasantest moments in the life of the missionary priest are those which he passes in the company of such of his brethren as are like-minded with himself, and whose similarity of occupation and interest forms a never-failing bond of union. I know but of one exception to this happy state of things, and that is created by one of the temptations to which all men, not excepting even priests, are exposed. The temptation I mean is that which arises from the spirit of jealousy. It is a certain, however painful, fact, that secular priests are sometimes morbidly suspicious of regulars, while the same enemy to peace of mind and charitable co-operation is occasionally

found to sow dissensions between secular priests engaged in neighboring missions and falsely believed to have rival interests. I have no wish to exaggerate the moral evil of these heart-burnings. They are seldom purely selfish, and have often their origin in some conscientious, although mistaken, idea of duty. Yet, after all that can be said for them, they are very miserable, and I earnestly recommend you to crush their first impulses. Rejoice in the truth wherever you can find it. Appreciate the good that is done by others, although not perhaps quite in your own way. Never allow any selfish consideration, disguised under the appearance of a sensitiveness to privilege, to blind you to the common interests of the Church. Do not resent the multiplication of missions in your neighborhood, although possibly injurious in a temporal point of view to your own. Cultivate a friendly feeling with the priests of such missions, assisting them where you can do it, rejoicing in their prosperity, and sympathising with their disappointments. Be well assured that all will come right in the end, if each perform his own work with zeal, and live at peace, and in charity with his neighbours.

There is another and very important class with which you may one day be brought into communica-

tion as priests on the mission. The class to which I refer is that of Religious Sisterhoods established in your parochial district. The relation between these communities and the priests of the mission in which they are called to work is not always easy to adjust, in consequence of the several parties to the compact having each their own distinct rights and privileges. If these rival claims cannot be brought into harmonious combination, there will arise that anomaly in the political constitution which is known by the name of an *imperium in imperio*. I have heard it said that nuns established in a parish are apt to press the rights of their several Orders with too little regard to those of the priests whom they come to aid; that they are, in fact, encroaching, exacting, and unaccommodating, and that they expect both the claims of the clergy and the interests of the parishioners to give way to their own uncompromising principles and inflexible rules. I should like, however, before expressing a decided opinion on this subject, to hear the nuns' side of the story. At any rate, I am here giving a lecture not to nuns, but to seminarists, who may one day have to work with nuns for the common good. Leaving, then, the possible errors or shortcomings of such religious communities to be dealt with by those who preach

to them, or by the bishops who represent the interests of the secular clergy, I will here say a word on their behalf, with the view of leading you to treat them with the utmost respect, consideration, and forbearance, if you should ever find yourselves in connexion with them as joint labourers for the salvation of souls. I speak always of female communities, because it is these which are usually employed to assist in parishes, whether as teachers, visitors, or intercessors with our Lord in a life of prayer and contemplation. Where animated by the true spirit of their vocation, they are a very savour of life in a mission. They go about their work with a calmness and recollectedness which nothing inspires so effectually as a life of devotion and of rule. Their very habit appeals to the instincts of our devout Irish poor with almost sacramental effect, and wins a way to the heart for all their words of wholesome advice and timely consolation. The acquisition of such a power over our people is surely a boon which demands of us in common gratitude a large amount of kindness, forbearance, and sympathy. While we must of course provide against any encroachment on our sacerdotal claims, we must at the same time remember that religious communities have their rights and their traditions as well as ourselves, and the way

most likely to secure us against inconvenience from the over-strained enforcement of these rights, will be found in the spirit of pliancy and accommodation with which we exercise our own.

Here I end this imperfect review of pastoral duties. The object of my lectures has been confined to that portion of our work which is relative and external. I have touched but very incidentally on that which consists in the cultivation of the interior spirit, and so far only as that spirit bears upon our exterior life. The conditions of sacerdotal sanctity form rather the materials of instruction in a Spiritual Retreat, or of that which you regularly receive from your local superiors, than of a course of lectures addressed to you by one who is not officially connected with your Seminary, and who comes among you less for the purpose of teaching you with authority than of giving you the fruits of his own experience in a sphere of duty which you will sooner or later be called upon to fill.

Yet I cannot conclude without reminding you once for all how vain will be your attempts to save the souls of others without an unremitting watchfulness over your own. Those priests are the happiest who, whether as members of a religious community or as seculars united under some posi-

tive however modified rule, are protected from the many dangers of laxity and self-will against which the life of a secular priest does not furnish any adequate safeguards in itself. If his lot be cast in a mission where he is left to supply the absence of any external rule by his own watchfulness over himself, he should select his confessor with great care, and make a point of applying to him for special prescriptions against those various temptations to the force and subtility of which an intimate knowledge of himself cannot fail to render him keenly sensitive. He will do well to obtain from his wise director some rule, neither so austere nor so complex as to clash with the obligations of a calling peculiarly exposed to the influence of accidental circumstances, and demanding a due share of salutary relaxation, yet one which at least may have the effect of giving him regular habits of life, and enabling him at once to employ and economise valuable time. It would be as impossible for me to anticipate the particulars of such a rule, as it is entirely beyond my province to impose it. Yet I am sure that there is one item which cannot fail to form part of it: that which consists in prescribing the practice of a daily morning meditatation, and that of a sufficient length. I remember to have once heard a remark made by a

Father of the Society of Jesus in a Clergy Retreat, which struck me as both true and important. He said that it is easier to meditate for a longer than for a shorter time. There are, as you well know, many excellent aids to the practice of meditation in the countless religious publications of our time, and especially in those which have proceeded from the great Religious Order which has done so much in this department of saintly science. If, however, you do not happen at any particular time to have one of these works at your command, or if you find, as is the case with some persons, that the system on which they proceed is too formal and mechanical, you have always at hand a repertory of subjects for meditation which is at once inimitable and inexhaustable ; I mean, of course, the Holy Scriptures, and especially those of the New Testament. I cannot say whether it may have been owing to anything special in the character of the priest or priests to whom the direction was given, but at all events I know of one eminent Jesuit Confessor whose practice it is to recommend the reading of some passage in the New Testament, and more particularly in the life of our Blessed Lord, on the preceding evening, as the best of all preparations for the meditation of the morning. I will add that the greatest use, as it seems to me,

may be made of the Missal and Breviary in the same department, with this further advantage, that while our liturgical offices suggest most profitable subjects of meditation, they receive in their turn from that exercise a new devotional light which secures us against the danger of mere formalism incident to our constantly recurring use of them. While on the subject of meditation, I may be permitted to add one or two words on the incalculable importance of keeping our minds free from distraction before and for some little time after saying Mass. I do not suppose that there are many of us who are in much danger of those excesses of spiritual transport which are said to have compelled a great Saint to distract himself, on principle, before saying Mass, in order that he might be physically equal to the performance of the act. In the case of ordinary priests, it is of the utmost moment to allow no subject, without some overpowering necessity, to make a demand on their attention between the time of rising and the end of their thanksgiving after Mass. It is a very bad habit to open letters before or immediately after the great devotional act of the morning ; and, as to newspapers, the less we have to do with them at all times the better, but, as a part of the *Præparatio ad Missam* they are a veritable

abomination. It is quite as important to avoid all unnecessary talking immediately after our Mass as before it. Of course, I do not mean such talking as falls directly in the way of duty, though even this may be materially lessened by care and forethought. If without any harshness or petulance we discourage such interruptions, they will die out of themselves, or be reduced to those cases of necessity which of course form legitimate exceptions to the rule.

To return. I will take up the thread of my discourse from a remark of a page or two back. When you enter on the duties of your vocation, let me urge upon you once more the great importance of choosing a good confessor and wise director. Do not satisfy yourselves with regarding him merely as the depository of your sins, but get him to guide you. This he probably will not do except at your request, particularly if you adopt the miserable practice of dodging about, instead of selecting your confessor with prudence, and cleaving to him with steadfastness. Remember the words of Divine wisdom: 'Be in peace with many, but let one in a thousand be thy counsellor. . . . . Nothing can be compared to a faithful friend, and no weight of gold or silver is able to countervail the goodness of his fidelity.'*

* Ecclesiasticus vi. 6, 15.

I assure you, my dear brethren, that there is one thought which has painfully occurred to me during the course of these instructions. It is that of my own great unfitness to take a ground so high as I must needs take it if I am to tell you the truth. Two considerations alone have served to mitigate if not to dispel this misgiving. The first of these considerations is, that I am not here by choice, but in obedience to the voice of authority. The second is that, while I have been teaching you, I have been at the same time teaching myself. For the rest, let me entreat you to receive what I have said, not because I say it, but because it is true, or at least true in its essence and in the main. Of him whose words they are, think only that they express not so much his practice as his convictions and his aims; and for his reward, if any reward he deserve, he does but entreat you to pray that those convictions may be operative and those aims fulfilled.

# APPENDIX TO LECTURE IV.

At the end of the four Lectures which I have devoted to the subject of Preaching, it may be useful to give a specimen of the kind of sermon which I have sought to recommend for the adoption of the young preacher. I shall thus be able to point out, in the way of example, both the class of subjects which I think it important to bring before our people, and the easiest and most practical mode of enforcing them. I have spoken more than once of our Blessed Lord's teaching in the Gospels as a never-failing ground-work of simple and useful instruction, and I will accordingly choose for my specimen one of the parables which is of frequent occurrence in the course of the Church Offices. The subject on which I will suppose that you wish to preach is that of the necessity of habitual preparation for death, and the parable which suggests the selection of this subject shall be that of the Ten Virgins. You will first do well to read the parable carefully over, with the view of mastering not only its general purport, but the various incidental points of practical importance which will be apt to escape the notice of a cursory reader, but which the habit of meditation will make it easy for you to note. I may observe, in passing,

that the Bible is all but a sealed book to those who read it chapter by chapter without endeavoring to extract the full sense of each verse. The Holy Scriptures are like one of those aromatic plants which must be bruised before they will yield their latent fragrance.

You will next do well, as in other similar instances, to observe the circumstances under which the parable was spoken, and the hearers to whom it was addressed. You will find that it forms one of the later discourses of our Lord, and that it appears to have been spoken immediately before His solemn description of the Day of Judgment, with the intervention only of another parable of like import, in which our accountability to the great Judge is illustrated by another similitude. You will also note that the whole discourse into which it enters was addressed by our Lord to His disciples. Hence you will conclude that even good Catholics stand in need of warnings against the danger of supineness and false security. On the general subject of the parable, you may remark that although it points directly to the Second Coming of our Lord and to the General Judgment, it nevertheless applies with equal force to the Particular Judgment, which each one of us will undergo as the immediate sequel of death. After these preliminary observations, you will proceed to analyse the parable itself, and afterwards, following our Lord's own example, to subjoin its practical application. You may remark that its subject derives illustration from the Eastern practice of honouring nuptial ceremonies by an escort of virgins bearing lamps as a symbol of purity and joy. In the parable, this company of attendants is supposed to consist in equal divisions of the wise and unwise. Up to a certain point, these several classes appear to form but one company. For all of them alike, as we read, go forth with their lamps to meet the Bridegroom and his Bride. But a difference is soon apparent. The wise have

taken oil with their lamps, while the unwise have taken none. All, however, had acted under a false alarm. The Bridegroom tarries, and the wise as well as the unwise Virgins take advantage of the delay to slumber and sleep. At midnight, a cry is heard: 'Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him.' Thereupon all the Virgins arise and proceed to trim their lamps. The unwise now, for the first time, set themselves to supply the loss of which they were conscious from the beginning, but which the delay in the Bridegroom's arrival had caused them to overlook. They have no oil for their lamps, and betake themselves in their panic to their wiser companions with the view of supplying their need. These naturally answer that their first duty is to provide for the honour of the Bridegroom; and that, were they to share their oil with their companions, it might peradventure run short. But the oil-venders were not far distant; why not have recourse to them? While the unwise prepare to follow this advice, or perhaps are actually on their way, the Bridegroom enters with His train of ready attendants, and the door is shut. Soon after, but too late, the unwise are at the door and clamour for admittance. It is only just too late, for the Bridegroom is within call, and meets their distracted appeal with the terrible words, 'I know you not.' Then follows the moral of the parable: 'Watch ye therefore, because ye know not the day nor the hour.' Now, I am well aware that no paraphrase can be otherwise than unjust towards the simple force of the original. But persons are so much in the habit of reading Scripture in an unpractical and unreal way, that it is often well to translate it into the language of the day.

We come next to the application. You will not fail to observe, as a startling feature both in this parable and in that of the Talents which follows it, that the awful punishment of exclusion from the Kingdom of Heaven is threatened,

in both cases, not against flagrant sin, but against indifference and spiritual sloth. Here, it is the penalty not of crime, but of unwisdom. All the Virgins had faith, but five of them alone had love. All had their lamps, but five of them lacked the oil of charity. The sin of the unwise consisted in this, that they lost the opportunity of repentance when they first became aware that they stood in need of it. They betook themselves to slumber with their empty lamps in their hands; and, although their wiser companions slumbered also, that which was in the case of the wise the rest of a tranquil conscience, was, in that of the unwise, the lethargy of a false security. When the Bridegroom came, the unwise did that which all panic-stricken sinners are inclined in their confusion to do. They run to the prudent and the holy, whose light then shines the more eminently by contrast with their own darkness. They would willingly eke out their own defects by the superabundant virtue of the good. But these latter reply that they have nothing to spare. The greatest Saints are the last to presume that their own merits are superabundant, and say, in the words of Scripture, that they are unprofitable servants, and have done no more than their duty. Moreover, they have no power given them by God of imparting to another any portion of their habitual grace. This in effect is what the wise Virgins say in the parable. They say that their oil is incommunicable, and direct their companions to the venders. This would be of course the advice of a Saint who should be asked by a terrified sinner to come to his aid. He would say in effect: 'Go to the fountain-head;' to Him from whom alone all grace cometh, or to those heavenly or earthly ambassadors to whom He has entrusted the dispensation of His grace. Go especially to His priests, to whom He has given the Keys of His Kingdom. Now comes one of the most significant and alarming features of the parable. 'Dum irent emere.' While they were on their way, the

Bridegroom came, and the door was shut. The obstinate delay of repentance is too often irretrievable. The arrival of the priest at the bedside of the dying may be anticipated by the arrival of death; remorse may take the place of true repentance, and the act of perfect contrition fail to be elicited. Here, you have scope, not for one sermon only, but for many. It is an awful subject, but never out of place, especially in penitential seasons. Yet you will not leave your audience at this point of depression. You will wind up your discourse by reminding them that their day has not set, and that the things which belong to their peace are not yet hidden from their eyes. But, should there be any present who are conscious to themselves of unforgiven mortal sin, or of habitual neglect of the means of grace, you will urge all such to make their act of contrition at once, with a firm purpose of presenting themselves without loss of time at the tribunal of penance and of pardon.

You will, of course, understand that I am here not giving you a complete sermon, but merely the heads of one which you would have to draw out into full and effective shape.

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